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THE MIRZA.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "HAJJI BABA," "ZOHRAB," "AYESHA," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE MIRZA.

STORY OF AZBEAZ, THE SHOEMAKER KING, CONTINUED.

The apartments occupied by Khodadad and Gulchin communicated with those of the Shah by a private door, through which Khodadad had free access, and the closet containing the key was so situated that temptation never ceased its persecutions. Azbeaz was wont, at stated times, to frequent the royal mosque, invariably accompanied by Khodadad; indeed, such was the King's love for him, that he was never happy unless so accompanied. On this account, it was difficult to find an opportunity, even should Khodadad have so desired, to satisfy his wife's curiosity; but as, in passing events, there is ever something which seems

to shadow the future, it was easy to perceive how the struggle here involved between duty and inclination would terminate. A circumstance soon occurred illustrative of this truth.

Sakalchok, the King's brother, having been restored to the full possession of his property, had abandoned the shoemaker's stall in the bazaar, and returned to the enjoyment of his home. In order to celebrate this event, and thereby to make a display of his gratitude, he thought it fitting to invite the King to a grand entertainment. He decorated his house with flowers, spread new carpets where the King was to sit, hired men and women singers and dancers, and ordered fire-works. Every luxury in season was spread on his board; a present of costly stuffs and precious ornaments was prepared, and the ground on which the royal footsteps trod, was overlaid with shawls of costly manufacture. All the dignitaries of the court, the chiefs of departments and those possessing wealth or distinction, not omitting the five old men, were gathered together on the occasion. The King was received at the gate by his brother, who waited upon him as

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a menial throughout the day, whilst Khodadad, the acknowledged royal favourite, stood pre-eminent near the person receiving constant marks of confidence and preference. During the course of the entertainment, when it was about drawing to a close, the five old men having obtained permission, stood forward making the lowest obeisance by touching their foreheads to the ground, the youngest, being spokesman, said :

" May it please the centre of the universe, this humblest of his slaves has a petition to make."

" Speak on," said Azbeaz, " what is there new ?"

" This less than the least," said he, " requests permission to address your Majesty without the presence of a witness."

" So be it," said the King, " let every one go from before me."

All retired out of hearing distance, excepting Khodadad.

" We are not alone," said the youngest old man.

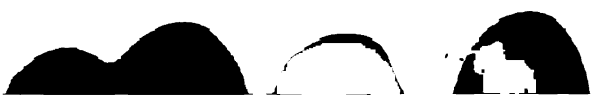
"This is my second self," said the King, pointing to the favourite, "fear not."

"Your slave must be silent, if such be your royal pleasure; but, as Allah is Allah, the matter is of great importance."

"Light of my eyes, retire!" exclaimed the Shah to Khodadad, who forthwith retreated, although he kept his attention anxiously fixed upon the scene that was enacting before him.

As soon as the King was thus left, the youngest old man, kneeling down, said in an undertone:

"May it please the asylum of the world, and as I am your sacrifice, my petition principally relates to Khodadad Khan. Your Majesty is aware of the current report, that when an infant he was found on a dunghill among a litter of puppies near the walls of the royal palace, by a negress, then slave to our deceased brother the money-changer. It is but this morning that I received a message from that same negress, now on her death bed, asserting that she possesses a secret of great



importance relating to Khodadad Khan, but which she can and will only divulge to your Majesty in person. Your humble slave, therefore, entreats your Majesty to accede to her wish, and, if it so pleases your Majesty, he will conduct you to her bedside."

"There is no harm in her demand," said Azbeaz. "We will go—where does she live?"

"As I am your sacrifice," said the other, "she resides in a poor village in the mountains, some five parasangs distant."

"There will be no difficulty," said the King; "we will go to-morrow."

"Your slave has still one more petition to make."

"Speak on," said the King.

"It is that Khodadad Khan do not accompany your Majesty."

"So be it," said the King; "I will see to that."

During this conference, the eyes of all were fixed upon the King and the youngest old man, great curiosity having been excited, but principally was that feeling aroused in the breast

of Khodadad, for he could plainly perceive, by the looks and gesticulation of the parties in conversation, that frequent allusion was made to him. His astonishment was still more awakened when he heard the Shah announce publicly that he should hunt on the following morning.

"Hunt!" exclaimed Khodadad; "the King can scarcely sit on a horse, how can he hunt! There is something more in this than meets the eye."

As soon as he again stood before his royal master, he exclaimed:

"Mashallah! your slave is made happy. We hear your Majesty rides out hunting to-morrow."

"So it is," said Azbeaz, a slight tint of confusion giving colour to his manner. "You are surprised because you presume I cannot ride. No more I can, and what is there extraordinary in that, when you know that I have bestrode nothing but a cobbler's stool all my life? Still I hunt to-morrow."

"What steed is your slave to prepare for your Majesty's convenience?" said Khodadad.

"You are to prepare nothing," said the King; "and what is more, you are not to accompany me."

At these words, the favourite was almost struck dumb with astonishment.

"Not accompany you!" he exclaimed. "What fault have I committed? Has your Majesty spoken your real mind, or has your slave not understood aright?"

"Whatever I have said—I have said," answered the King. "You do not go."

Khodadad left the presence for the first time displeased. Although the King had given no reason why he was not allowed to go; and, although his manner was unchanged in kindness, still he was overwhelmed by this evident want of confidence, and in his gloom, contemplated it as the beginning of his downfall. He had received no intimation of what the youngest old man had communicated, a slight which the King had never before cast upon him, and he was left to ruminate upon this new position which his affairs had assumed, without the hope of any immediate redress. In this frame

of mind, wounded both in pride and in spirits, he returned to his wife, who soon perceived the change which had been effected in his demeanour.

"What has happened, light of my eyes?" exclaimed the affectionate Gulchin. "Your countenance is turned upside down."

"In truth it is," said Khodadad. "I am full of astonishment and vexation." Upon which he related all that had occurred.

"Ah! is it so?" exclaimed Gulchin. "This is my uncle's work; let me go seek him and make him explain. Can those five wretched old men have laid their heads together to plot our destruction? This cannot be, for by so doing, they will take the caps from off their own heads. Is it a little thing to have a niece at court, who can create a good shade for them to sit under? This passes comprehension."

Being late in the day when this took place, Gulchin deferred going to seek her uncle until the following morning. Having done so, she found that he had accompanied the Shah in his hunting excursion, and she returned home,

almost as much vexed and mortified as Khodadad had been. They sat in deep consultation what was to be done.

"I wonder," said Khodadad, "whether the Shah has taken the key with him? If he has, then indeed I shall begin to fear that my day is over, and that the sun has set upon us for ever."

As soon as he had uttered these words, Gulchin arose from her seat, and with great animation, said:

"My soul, Khodadad, let us go see—there is nothing to prevent us—the Shah is absent and the closet open."

"Let us go," said her husband; "there can be no danger; if the key is gone, 'tis well I should know it; if not, we will straightway return whence we came."

Accordingly, taking each other by the hand, they proceeded from their own apartment into that of the King. All the attendants of the palace looking upon Khodadad in the same light as the King himself, every door was open to him. When, accompanied by Gulchin, he entered the closet, Khodadad cast his eyes

immediately towards the very spot where he knew the key had been secreted.

"Nothing has been touched here," said he. The very box in which it was kept, then met his eye; he approached and straightway opened it. There was the key untouched; his body was seized with a tremour when he surveyed it. whilst his countenance underwent a sudden change.

"My soul, Khodadad, what is the matter?" said Gulchin —"wherefore are you so alarmed? Here is nothing but a common rusty key—what is this?"

"Touch it not, Gulchin!" exclaimed her husband. "You are ignorant of its power."

"Touch it not!" repeated his wife, in surprise; "how very weak you must be to be thus alarmed! Let me take it up." Upon which, seizing it, and keeping hold of it for some time, her face too changed colour, and her heart began to beat violently.

"By your soul, Khodadad," she said, "this is odd! how very marvellous! it quite presses my hand."

"Give it to me in the name of Allah!" said

her husband, fearful lest its impulse might assume too powerful an influence over his wife, and accordingly he took it into his own hand. "Give it to me," he repeated, and he stood grasping it, his hand extended like one impelled by the magic of some mighty temptation. His wife now became frightened at his looks; they bespoke a wildness and an agitation which predicted some strange event.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" exclaimed Khodadad, advancing a few steps towards the door.

"Stop," said Gulchin, "throw it down in the name of the prophet."

"I am without help—my power is gone," said Khodadad, panting from excess of excitement; "I can no more." Upon saying which, he moved, or rather ran off with increasing speed, whilst his wife, almost fainting with fright, summoned strength, and sprung forward to seize his robe, which falling from his shoulders as he darted away, remained in her hand, whilst her eyes glared upon him in wonder, until she saw him fairly disappear through a distant gate-way. Her faintness

then increased, and tottering back to her own apartment, she gave way to the most desponding apprehension, running to and fro in every direction, devising a thousand bewildering schemes for overtaking him, and then abandoning them in despair as fast as they were devised. She then opened every casement, ran to the terrace top, in the hope of catching some glimpse of him, and finished by despatching servants into every avenue of the palace, to ascertain whether or not he had been seen to pass. At length, exhausted and worn by anxiety, she lay down in despair, when the following extraordinary words which he had once uttered 'I shall come back a king,' struck her recollection, and she started from her couch like one demented. Her quick imagination rung the changes upon those words in endless variety. She wondered what they could really portend—how such a thing could be—who was to place him on the throne—what was to become of Azbeaz—what would become of her; there was no end to the tortures of doubt and uncertainty by which she became afflicted, and in that state we must leave her

for the present, to see what the other personages of our tale are undergoing.

Azbeaz had issued forth from his palace at the earliest call of the morning, escorted by the youngest old man as his guide, and by all the state and circumstance attendant upon a royal hunting expedition. He bestrode a steady mule, and was seated upon an easy cushion, for no horseman was he, and no saddle had his knees ever clasped. Having purposely ordered his huntsmen and attendants to disperse in search of game, in order to cloak his purpose, and taking only a few followers with him, he pursued his way, until they reached an obscure village high up in the mountainous range that skirted the plain. He alighted at the door of a hovel, into which his guide entered first, in order to prepare the invalid for the arrival of the King. Azbeaz having followed, he perceived, lying on the ground on a decayed carpet, the old negress, apparently in the last stage of decrepitude. She was still enough alive to be able to understand who was her visitor, and having been raised up a little, she proceeded in a sufficiently

audible voice to stammer out the following words:

"Forgive the weakness of a dying old woman, but the secret she has to divulge must be known, or she will die with the weight of committing an injustice on her head. Give ear, whatever I say is the truth."

"Good! good!" said the King, "we can't have enough of truth."

It was thus she continued:

"The late King, every body knows, was an usurper; he put his predecessor to death by poison, slew all the children of that unfortunate man, and no heir was left. The chance of one, however, still existed, because one of the surviving wives proved to be with child. That wife happening to be very beautiful, the usurper did not kill her, but ordered that the moment her offspring saw light, it should be thrown to the dogs. That poor creature (for she died shortly after) placed great confidence in me, and she made me promise to save her child. I did save it. She gave birth to a son, which I was the means of conveying to the house of this man's brother, (pointing to the

youngest old man,) and he was brought up by him. I hear he is alive and noticed by the present Shah. This is a proof of what I assert," and she held up a jewel richly set in gold; "this was round the child's neck when I brought it away from the dying mother. I have said it—now let me die in peace."

Azbeaz opened well his ears to catch the words of the dying negress, and when she ceased speaking, without betraying any unpleasant emotion, but rather a feeling of joy, he exclaimed,

"Then, as I live, Khodadad is the lawful King."

The words had scarcely left his mouth, before the sound—the awful sound of the great gong on the turret, so well known to the ears of Azbeaz, was heard, which rung throughout the mountain with the same portentous reverberations as have been before described. Azbeaz having listened with the greatest attention until the sound had entirely expired, exclaimed:

"There goes another King, as sure as fate. By my beard that key is at work again. If

it be Khodadad, there is no harm done; but should it be Sakalchok, then we must put our trust in Allah, for there is none to be placed in him."

He had scarcely made an end of these words, when, turning round, he perceived the old negress a corpse by his side, and the youngest old man shaking in his shoes from head to foot.

"Let us go," he exclaimed, "let us go see what destiny has prepared for us. It is plain that some change has occurred in the world, for if nothing else speaks truth, that gong with a burnt father does."

Having ordered a proper burial to be provided for the deceased, and giving some words of encouragement to his companion, he mounted his mule, and making all haste across the plain, returned to the city. As he approached, he perceived an unusual stir about the gate, and crowds of people collected together in groups, all being armed, and apparently prepared to meet some great emergency. He roared out to the first man he saw, and inquired what news?

"By your soul and by the King's beard," said the man, "what can your slave know, but what he is told? We are informed that there is a new King."

"What is his name?" said Azbeaz, with great anxiety in his accent.

"By the prophet, what do I know?" said he.

Going further and advancing into the city, he again inquired of an assembly of well dressed men.

"What's the name of the new King?"

As soon as they recognized Azbeaz, they bowed themselves to the ground, (for he was highly respected), and said:

"As we are your slaves, it is Khodadad Khan—curses be on his head—what more can we say?"

"If it be Khodadad," exclaimed Azbeaz, with his inevitable smile, "then praise be to Allah; for he is our lawful King—lead me to him."

"What manner of man is this?" said they, in utter astonishment; "he is either the maddest or the wisest of men. Whether he be

shoemaker, or whether he be King, he always laughs and is always contented. See, he says *Shukiur Allah*, praise be to God, upon losing a throne—wonderful madman is he!"

Azbeaz made his way to the palace through crowded streets, astonishing every one by his determination, for who could conceive that his life was not in jeopardy if submitted to the power of the new King? When he reached the court of the palace, in the recess of which the great throne is situated, he there found congregated the courtiers, the viziers, men of the pen, and men of the sword, but on looking towards the throne, upon which he expected to see Khodadad duly seated, he perceived it to be vacant. An avenue was made for him to pass through, and he was treated with every demonstration of respect, as if he were still the King. He had not proceeded many steps, ere he perceived Khodadad advancing in haste towards him, holding the key in his hand. He straightway threw himself at his feet, whilst at the same time, presenting the mysterious instrument of his elevation, and depositing it before him, he exclaimed :

"Pardon! pardon! we have done wrong! Forgive my crime. The temptation was too great, and your slave could not resist—miserable that he is—oh forgive—forgive!"

"What words are these?" said Azbeaz. "Am I the only man in the world to be King? What do you see in this hump and monkey face, that you should insist upon his becoming the head of the nation? No—all is as it should be. We are not the children of Allah for nothing. He ordains every event for the best—he sees whilst we are blind—he directs whilst we only follow. You have been pursuing the decrees of fate, and in so doing, truth has come to light, and the world will perceive how justice has been ordained. You, Khodadad, you are the lawful King of this country. See this, O, you men—men of the pen—and men of the sword!" addressing the assembly, and at the same time, drawing from his breast the jewel delivered to him by the dying negress, "this bauble is a proof of the truth of what I say."

He then described, in a few words, the scene to which he had been witness, ordered

the youngest old man to stand forth and corroborate his words, and finished by declaring that Khodadad was the lawful King, the descendant of the former dynasty, and then invited, the proper authorities instantly to instal him as such.

Khodadad in all humility consented to that which he could not avoid, and being led forth by Azbeaz, and conducted to the room of state, over the great gate of the palace, he was then duly presented to the people as their lawful sovereign. Gulchin looked on from the terrace-top in rapture, whilst Azbeaz, who became, in fact, the adviser and the principal vizier, as he continued to be the bosom friend of the new King, returned to pursuits and habits which he cherished, and it is even said, was charmed to have an opportunity of shewing that he could make a shoe better than Sakalchok.

Every one present appeared charmed, and expressed their approbation by repeating the words Mashallah and Barikallah, as soon as the Prince ceased to speak, but no one seemed

at all surprized at the miraculous parts of the story, and appeared to look upon them quite as a matter of course.

"And this is all true," said the Prince, as soon as he had taken breath. "The mountains are there to the present day, the very hole in their surface from which issued the armies exists, and the ruins of the tower may be traced in the plain, although little is left of the city."

"Most certainly it is true," said my neighbour, the Tartar chief, "descendants of Azbeaz are now in existence, and all that part of Tartary which once owned his sway, is very well governed; some are even old enough to recollect the tower and the great gong."

"This is quite possible," calmly remarked, my friend, the Mirza, "for more extraordinary things than those related by the Prince have come to pass. Only turn to the history of our Rustam Zal, and you will see that he, with his own arm, performed more wonders than all Azbeaz's iron armies put together. And as for the power of the key, is there a day of my life in which I am not impelled to act in spite of my reason? Are

there not temptations which run away with me quite as much as did the key with Azbeaz and Khodadad? Therefore that part of the story is quite easy to believe."

"But what does the *Sahib*, the gentleman, say to my tale?" said the Prince, turning towards me with great deference of manner. "I hope he has done me the honour to approve."

I did not fail to express myself extremely delighted; I complimented the Prince upon his manner of expressing himself, but particularly upon his invention; "for," said I, "you really have given the appearance of truth to that which must, in its nature, be fabulous."

"How is this," said he, "will you not believe that such things can be? All the members of this company are ready to believe, and even take their oaths, if necessary, to the truth of what I have related, and why too should not you believe?"

"A very long discussion, indeed, would ensue," said I, "were I to endeavour to show you why I cannot believe in supernatural

agencies, exercised locally, partially, and for objects which do not apparently comprehend the well-being of the whole of God's creation, and which are not so fully established by proof and witnesses, as entirely to overcome my unbelief." Then recollecting the old story of the flying fish and Pharoah's chariot wheel; I said:

"But do not be angry if I refuse to give credence to what you have related, however much delighted I may be with the story; perhaps, I too, may assert some facts relating to my own country, to which you may not be willing to give credence, but to the truth of which, I, in my turn, am ready to take my oath."

"*Ohi*—oh, well said and well done," said the Prince, his words echoed by the poet, and repeated by the rest of the company. "Speak on—let us hear—our ears are all open. We have given up our souls to you."

I then said:

"Perhaps every one present has seen a ship, and though they may not have sailed in one, have remarked how it is impelled by wind; perhaps, too, some may have been caught in a tempest, or observed its effects on the sea.

Now, we have ships in my country, which, in defiance of storms and tempests, will make their way right in the teeth of the wind, and thus perform voyages from one end of the world to the other."

I paused awhile after having made this assertion to hear the remarks of the company. I could perceive incredulity in every face; a little scorn and contempt, perhaps, was associated with that feeling, but it was plain no one believed my words.

"*Sahib ekhtiar.* You are at liberty, of course, to affirm what you please," said the Prince, "but to me, it appears that what you have advanced is wholly impossible."

"What words are these?" said another. "You might as well say that I can thrust a spear through my enemy's body, and he not bleed, as to say a ship will go ahead against wind."

I heard the word *derough, derough*—lie! lie! whispered about from mouth to mouth throughout the assembly, and I became convinced that I was totally disbelieved.

I then tried them upon another subject.

"There is another thing," said I, "to the truth of which I am ready to take my oath. In my country, our cities are lighted at night by the means of lanterns suspended on iron pillars. A subterranean vapour is made to circulate through our streets, which is led to the summit of the said pillars, and at a given hour, men run about the city, carrying a lighted taper in their hands, which they merely present to a small spiral tube, whence a flame is seen to issue, which keeping alive the night through, illuminates the city like day, the inhabitants meanwhile sleeping soundly, unapprehensive of evil consequences."

"Where, in the name of Allah," said the Prince, "have you found words to affirm such things? A subterranean fire running under ground all through your streets, and nobody afraid! Yours must be a world different from ours, inhabited by men of a different formation to Persians. I cannot believe what you say."

"People may talk of Persians being liars,"

said one of the company, "but as there is but one Allah, and Mahommed is his prophet and Ali his lieutenant, let them go to the Franks for the future. Wonderful assertions have we heard to-day."

"Now I begin to understand," said a man of the law who was present, "why Franks are unbelievers of our faith, the ever blessed and only true faith of Islam, why they reject our prophet and despise his sayings, while they adhere with so much pertinacity to their own. See this Sahib—he tells us of things which cannot be true, and believes in them, whilst events which may occur every day, which so many people here present, men of respectability and worthy of confidence, have seen and heard of, he rejects. Is it not plain that the reputation which Persia has acquired for the sagacity and acuteness of her sons, has been well acquired, whilst all the rest of mankind are kept in a state of total blindness. Let the Sahib forgive my words," said the speaker, turning himself to me, "but in truth, our holy prophet legislated with all wisdom, when he

said, 'As for the unbeliever, all that is left for him, is *katl, katl,* slay, slay.'"

"May your shadow never be less," said I, laughing, addressing the man of the law, whilst I assumed a mock humility of manner; "may your house flourish—we are grateful—we kiss the dust of your slippers!"

My words and manner seemed to amuse the Prince and his guests, for instead of siding with the man of the law, they most good humouredly laughed outright, and evinced by their conduct, how little they partook of the holy man's zeal. This circumstance produced the effect of turning the conversation into a new channel, and I was questioned on the right hand and on the left, upon the nature of our institutions in Frangistan, for so they call Europe, with a pertinacity and liveliness of curiosity, which exhibited one of the most striking characteristics of the Persians in its strongest colours, namely, their love of hearing and knowing of strange things.

"Sir," said one *berai khoda,* "in the name

of Allah, is it true that you never see the sun in your country?"

"Wo can't believe," said another, "what is currently reported here, that you cut your horses' tails off, and also go to the trouble of cutting your dogs' tails off too."

Close upon this question followed another.

"Forgive me," said a third, "but swear by the soul of your father and mother, is it true that your Kings dance like luties?* And is it also true that women may rule over you, and that they too dance in public?"

Before I could satisfy any one of these questions, I heard a voice crying out from a distance:

"Tell me, O Sahib, can you belong to a nation which holds nothing unclean, to people who may even eat of a dog and not be defiled? This passes our comprehension."

At length, our host, the Prince, who was too well bred to allow of my being more questioned and teazed, seeing it impossible for me to

* Professed buffoons

ıtisfy every one's curiosity, called for kalians, ; a signal for breaking up the assembly. laving performed this last act of the usual eremonial, the Prince took leave of us with he most flattering speeches, assuring each of iis guests of the pleasure he had enjoyed in heir society, and hoped, on some future occasion, that we might meet again. As a stranger, he distinguished me more particularly by his attentions, and I left him impressed with favourable notions of Tartar urbanity. I quitted the house in company of my friend, the poet-laureat, who, I could not but remark, had been disgusted with the exhibition made by his countrymen of their ignorance and want of proper breeding in their conduct towards me. He exclaimed as we rode along:

"Did you see, O my soul! did you ever see such animals—apes—beasts with a mark upon them?"

I assured him that I had been extremely amused, regretted that all Asiatics were not possessed of his discernment and sagacity, and left him, hoping that he would soon

again allow me to hear another of his most agreeable stories.

"Upon my eyes be it," said he, and we parted.

VISIT IV.

I SOON called upon my friend again with a view of adding another story to my stock, for destitute as I usually was of occupation, and oppressed by much leisure, I determined to persevere in that which not only afforded me great actual enjoyment, but also materially increased my insight into Asiatic manners. The Mirza expressed himself happy to see me, and, moreover, was flattered at my pertinacity, in listening to what, in his modesty, he called, 'words without texture—things of naught—vain imaginations.' I said, although I was much amused by the stories which he related, I admired his invention, and the happiness of his expressions, and should be happy to listen to them merely for the amusement's sake; yet, in truth, I was principally attracted by certain observations and allusions which came

from him incidentally, and which constantly confirmed and threw much light upon the text of our sacred books. Such observations, I remarked, were invaluable to us who were given to inquisitiveness, sceptical in matters difficult of proof, and who were more willing to cede our belief to one single coincidence adduced in the manner detected in his stories, than to whole volumes of dissertation and argument.

The Mirza was struck by this remark, and with that acuteness of perception which I have seldom met in a Mahommedan, he perceived at once its tendency.

"Our manners, mode of government, ceremonial, in short, everything you see in Persia and generally in Asia," said he, "are so many living monuments of antiquity. Since the days of Jemsheed, it may be said that my country is still the same. True it has been occasionally overrun from east to west and then from west to the east, first by the Tartars, and then by the Saracens, but as they are Asiatics as well as ourselves, and our manners being much the same, no great

changes have been effected. It may, indeed, be said that one despotic King is much like another, in forms and modes of government, at least, although there may be great varieties of individual disposition and character. What occurred in such matters in the days of Kaiomers, the first King of the Pishdadian dynasty, occurred in those of Gustasp, the last of that race; and so on through their successors, the Iskanders, the Darabs, the Seljuks, the Sefies, the Timours, the Nadirs, down to our own time, all have pursued the same system of government. We have witnessed no great revolutions, such as we hear of in Frangistan, where we find that the people occasionally gain the upper hand, put Kings to death, and appoint some of their own class to govern in their stead. We are always the same, our ideas run in the same channel, and, indeed, being far removed from more enlightened nations, I do not see how we can ever change."

"What appears impossible to us mortals," said I, "is brought about by the inscrutable hand of Providence. Although you do not

change, European nations do. My own country is famous for its changes. Not a year passes over our heads without some invention being produced, which gives a new impetus to people's minds and turns their energies into new channels. Then we are found in all parts of the world, legislating, governing, interfering, aiding the oppressed and relieving the indigent. Why should we not find our way also into your countries? To say the truth, I know of no Asiatic nation which, if properly acted upon, would sooner catch the spirit of innovation and improvement than the Persian. You are gay, light and docile by nature, and are fond of imitation; as an instance, who could ever have supposed that during the short sojourn of our military men amongst you, they could have achieved the singular feat of creating an army upon European principles? But so it is, and so it would be in every thing else. You are also remarkably intelligent, quick of apprehension, and enthusiastic in your admiration, where your reason is convinced. Such qualities would not fail to lead to all sorts of changes;

but you must have support—you must be provided with some stay against which you can lean, and upon which you can depend; and that must not be an uncertain security, one resting merely upon the personal character of a despotic King."

"*Ahi, ahi!*" exclaimed the Mirza, sighing. "You say true. My eyes see it all, as surely as my ears hear. Inshallah, please heaven, may all what you have predicted happen, and may your words prove true words."

"Great changes, gradual though they be, are said to be taking place in the Eastern world," said I, "England once being in possession of the whole of Hindustan, the same spirit of improvement which pervades her sons in their own country, will be sure to be carried to their Eastern as well as to their other vast possessions. Wherever they have dominion, they must create reforms, correct abuses, and with the blessing of Allah, produce improvement. It is as much their nature and the nature of their government to do so, as it is the nature of yours to repress individual exertion, to crush the powers of human intellect,

and to keep whole masses subservient to the interest and will of one."

"Allah! Allah!" exclaimed the Mirza, wondering at my words. "Would to God, that such things might come to pass during my day, what a poem I would write!"

"But in the mean while," said I, "before these changes occur, let me enjoy a continuation of those delightful stories which you know so well how to invent and relate; they produce recollections which give truth to the identity of an ancient people. I am come to hear one, for I know you must be free to-day, since the Shah is gone to hunt, and you have assured me, that you have always one in store."

"You do me much honour," said my friend; "in truth, I was thinking of you this very day, and as I know the hour is fortunate, you could not have come more opportunely. But a circumstance has happened of which you will be happy to hear."

"In the name of Allah, what is it?" said I.

"It is this," said the Mirza; "a discussion

took place last night at the grand vizier's, of which the Shah has obtained cognizance, and at which I, this less than the least, was present, and the subject is as follows :

"Mollah Feridoun asserted that it would be a crime, repugnant to our laws and institutions, to allow our women the same freedom as the women of Frangistan,—'for,' said he, 'no man in Persia can have sufficient confidence in any one of his wives, to allow her to act for herself, and without superintendance.' I, with that wit which Allah has bestowed upon me, took the opposite side, and a warm discussion ensued, which has given rise to the story which I am about to relate."

"It is a subject," said I, "which has occupied much of my thoughts since I have been in Persia, and I have come to the conclusion that no nation, consequently, no Mahommedan nation, can make any advance in civilization, until they emancipate their women from the thraldom, both of mind and body, in which they are held. But allow me to ask, if it be a fair question, what is the real state of the female world in Persia? We hear much of its

degradation, but it is evident little can be known that is authentic, seeing how complete and entire is the exclusion of the stranger from the interior of your harems."

With the frankness of a free and enlightened mind, which characterised my friend above his countrymen, particularly on the delicate subject of women, he answered as follows:

"Give ear," said he; "we call the habitation of women the harem, that is 'sacred place'; but we ought better to call it the 'accursed place,' for surely it is the promoter of every bad quality in the heart, such as jealousy, cruelty, injustice, despotism, and tyranny; in that retirement, man reigns supreme; no one is there to dispute his authority, and who can say what may be the brutalities and horrors committed within those so called sacred places? No women in the world are more strictly watched than ours. The seraglios of the Turks are public places in comparison. Whatever the reason of this may be is unknown. Some attribute our jealousy to the dryness of our climate, which heats the blood, and makes us full of nervous

sensibility; others, to the inhibitions of Mahommed, our prophet and legislator; who, when on his death-bed, bequeathed to us these his last words—"Keep watch over your religion and your women." Whatever may be the cause, true it is, that our women, instead of being the solace and comfort of our lives, are, in truth, our bane and misery. They are taught that their honour and virtue consist not only in unwillingness to be acquainted with man, but also in not seeing him, and not being seen by him. To that effect, they believe that in Paradise, men will have their eyes fixed on the tops of their heads, in order not to see those fair creatures, the property of others. It is impossible to affirm, even for us Persians, what passes within the walls of the royal harem. When a Shah dies, his women are lodged in a separate quarter, and there shut up for life. On that account, when that event takes place, it is succeeded by such violent grief and such manifestations of despair, that the cries of the women are heard far and near; not, indeed, indicating the love they bore the deceased, but bewailing the loss of

all future hopes of freedom. Should a weak creature of a woman be known to look at a man, the simple suspicion has become the cause of her death; her punishment for such like faults, being thrown into the grave alive. An old decrepid eunuch, more hideous than Satan, is appointed the superintendant of each department of the harem, and so great is his despotism, that the stillness of death reigns throughout the whole establishment. Loss of liberty is not the only misery endured in a harem; all sorts of abomination ensue—murders, infanticides, poisonings, and every crime which is engendered by the evil passions of the heart, when excited by injustice and oppression. The principal desire of the numerous women in the royal harem is to be married, and as that cannot take place should they be royal mothers, all their schemes tend to prevent such an event occurring. Enormities consequently ensue. When women have increased over and above, then they are married off to the right and to the left, and that is the moment most eagerly expected, as being their best chance of emanci-

pation from bondage. I could speak for ever on this agitating subject," said he, "but I have said enough to explain my feelings, and the story which I will now relate, may, perhaps, convince you that our country is as likely to produce virtuous women as good men."

Having been much interested by the words of my friend, I no more interrupted him, but allowed him to proceed, which he did as follows:

HISTORY OF SHAH ABBAS, THE FOOLISH HUSBAND AND THE VIRTUOUS WIFE.

Shah Abbas, that magnificent monarch, was a great admirer of female beauty, and there was no city, town, or village in his great empire which was not visited by his emissaries in search of charms and attractions worthy of being submitted to his inspection. But, although his seraglio was filled with the fairest beauties of Asia, still he had never yet met with one who so entirely united the fascination

of wit and intelligence to the allurement of personal charms, as wholly to captivate his heart. The grand vizier, in his sagacity, was aware that no passion is better adapted to mollify the human breast than love; and, consequently, never ceased his endeavours to discover the precise personage, who, becoming his wife, might enslave his master's affections, and who, by her prudence and intelligence added to the power of her charms, might be made subservient to the well-being of his subjects and kingdom.

At that time, in Ispahan, lived a young merchant, whose father had amassed great wealth in trade. The family was of mean origin, but riches made them ambitious, and their principal desire was to be noticed by the great. The father was wont to make large presents to the grand vizier and to others of the Shah's ministers, simply to be allowed to stand before them at their morning and evening levees; and the son, who partook largely of the parental weakness, was ever seeking opportunities of speaking and making

himself known to men of notoriety, fashion or power. This son, who was called Abdallah Beg, had lately returned to his native city from Basora, whither he had travelled upon business, and, in addition to considerable riches, had brought with him a wife. This young lady was the daughter of the first Persian merchant at Basora, and was, in truth, the most perfect creature, both in charm of person and in excellence of wit, that had been known for ages throughout the region of Mesopotamia. She had escaped the search of the King of Persia's emissaries—Basora not being within the limits of his dominions, but she was well known to them by reputation. She married Abdallah because her father was connected with his father by trade, and also because he was a handsome and well-conducted, though weak, young man, and one who could maintain her in opulence and respectability.

She was now in the zenith of her beauty; her reputation had preceded her, and when Abdallah Beg reached Ispahan, accompanying his wife, the gossip of the day led to a remark that it was well she had secured the protection

of a husband, or otherwise she would have become the prey of the Shah and his eunuch myrmidons. In truth, Shah Abbas was a man of sense and judgment, for he knew that he might tyrannise with impunity over his subjects, upon every point, excepting in matters relating to the harem. That place he religiously kept sacred in common with every Mussulman; he had never been known to transgress himself, and was inexorable in punishing others.

Abdallah, therefore, had conducted his beautiful wife, in the perfect confidence of security, to his harem in Ispahan, and having deposited her there, he freely entered into the society of his friends, and received their congratulations on his safe return. Such congratulatory speeches were accompanied by hints, that he was well known to be the fortunate possessor of the most beautiful and accomplished wife that had ever been seen, and finding that this circumstance gave him consideration, he was led to hope, vain and time-serving as he was, with such a passport, that he might be admitted into the society of the great. He was often induced by his vanity to break through

decorum, in matters relating to women, and to boast of his unrivalled possession, and to such length did he carry his imbecility, that he became the by-word of the gay and the licentious, who did not fail to banter him in no measured terms, whilst he, proud of being noticed, felt himself honoured by their raillery.

Not satisfied with associating with those of his own class, he was always thrusting himself forward among the officers and men of consequence, who thronged the gate of the royal palace, sitting whenever he was so invited, and satisfied to stand before them whenever he could attain no higher encouragement. Among such personages, Kaka pembeh,* the King's jester, and now he might be almost called favourite, was preeminent. From the grand vizier himself to the lowest carpet-spreader, the favour of this celebrated man was sought for with eagerness. Enjoying constant access to the King's person, oftentimes one of his sayings illicited at a favourable moment, was known to make the fortune of the man

* *Kaka pembeh* or brother Cottonwool, is the same who acts so conspicuous a part in our first story.

in whose favour he interfered. It became one of Abdallah's favourite objects to make himself noticed by the Kaka, and his ambition was soon gratified, for the jester, who never lost an opportunity of catering for the tastes and appetites of his royal master, having ascertained the nature of the young merchant's character, and acquired a knowledge of his history, immediately made him the object of his devoted attention.

A daily assembly took place at the gate of the royal palace of the officers and courtiers in attendance, an hour before the great selam, where the Kaka presided, and where the scandal and gossip of the day was freely discussed. One morning, observing Abdallah Beg standing in the crowd, the jester called to him by name, and requested him to step into the room and take a seat, using at the same time, words so flattering and inviting, that the vain and silly man scarcely new whether he stood on the earth or in the heavens.

"In the name of Allah, Abdallah Beg," said the jester, "be pleased to sit. Such men as you are worthy to grace any assembly. See how handsome he is; observe his wit, his ex-

cellence—praises be said, the gate of the King is honoured by his presence. Where may some of the buffaloes be who sit in assemblies, and where such a man as our Abdallah? who, in truth, carries more sense in the nail of his little finger, than half the world in their caps."

The devoted Abdallah, smoothing down his mustachios and beard, giving a curl to the locks which dangled behind his ear, depressing his girdle, the better to exhibit his waist, and settling himself well down in his seat, as one may perchance have seen some vain beauty do, striving for more admiration; having waited with a bashful air till the Kaka's rhapsody was over, at length ventured to look up and faintly to say,

"You are full of condescension. Whose dog am I," he added, "that can venture to aspire to the King's gate?"

"Aspire to the King's gate, indeed!" exclaimed the Kaka; "what words are these? If you are not to look there or any where else you please, who is? Are not you the man who possesses what even the Shah does not

possess? *Bah! bah!* talk of Shahs, indeed! Here is a man who goes into the country of the Arabians, who hears of a treasure in the shape of a houri of paradise, whom every body, even Kings and Pachas wish to possess, but cannot; he walks in, and with those two eyes of his which you see, and with that tongue of his which you have heard, carries it off like one who strolls into a garden, selects the finest fruit, eats it and laughs at all the world around him, who stare at his good luck, whilst he coolly wipes his lips. Such is Abdallah Beg! By the salt of the Shah, by the beard of the prophet, by the souls of all our mothers and fathers, I, who am the least of dogs in this assembly, I assert, that this Abdallah is a man of whom there is not his equal in Ispahan."

Having said this, he cast his eyes around the assembly as if he really had spoken his mind in right earnest, whilst those who knew his wiles could scarcely refrain from laughter. Abdallah Beg, in the mean while, falling a victim to this palpable cajoling said:

"Your slave, begs that your condescension may never be less. All that you

have said is true—he is not without luck—whatever he has is yours—he places it at your disposal—he begs of you to accept of it. Whenever you will be pleased to honour his humble roof with your august presence, your steps will be fortunate, and you will cause his head to touch the skies."

"Have you heard—have you heard?" exclaimed Cottonwool. "Here is an invitation to this less than the least. By the soul of the prophet, the Kaka's fortune is on the rise. We shall be the guests of Abdallah Beg; these are facts, not words. If I am not the rose, I shall rub myself against that which is—I shall be the bit of clay. If the nightingale be not in my hand, I shall sit under the tree in which it sings. Abdallah Beg, may your kindness never be less. I am your slave—Cottonwool kisses your feet—whenever you will command, he is ready; let it be soon, for my liver is already beginning to burn, and my heart beats with a double pulse."

"Upon my eyes be it," said Abdallah, unconscious of the suppressed smiles and im-

pending titters of the surrounding assembly. "My house will be honoured. Your slave is full of gratitude. You are my lord, my master. I will go spread happiness throughout my family—our heads will reach the skies."

Upon which, the infatuated man took his leave, his head almost touching the ground from excess of adulation, whilst the malicious Kaka and his companions, watching the progress of his conceit, burst into uncontrollable laughter as soon as his back was fairly turned.

"You have done honour to his father's grave," said one to the jester, through the explosions of his merriment.

"*Mashallah*," said a second, "in his enthusiasm, he will make roast meat of his father and mother, and invite you to eat them."

"Poor wretch!" exclaimed a third; "I never before saw so much abomination eaten at one meal."

Thus was the morning passed at the royal gate, the Kaka extolling himself for having laid the foundation of a scheme which could not fail to prove a source of entertainment to

the Shah, whilst, at the same time, he secured to himself an increase of influence and approbation.

In the mean while, the devoted Abdallah strutted away from the assembly, at least, one gez taller than before. He scarcely knew how to comport himself—he could not sufficiently vibrate his nether body, nor swing his arms to and fro. His cap ran the chance of falling off his head from excess of obliquity, and he curled his moustachio so fiercely upwards, that his meek face was scarcely to be recognised; he passed his mercantile acquaintances on the full swing, scarcely deigning to bestow upon them more than a protecting nod, whilst to those who were above him in station, he did not fail to announce, that "Kaka Pembeh," so he now familiarly called him, had promised to dine with him. He straightway began to calculate the future advantages likely to accrue from this circumstance, and ere he had reached the gate of his house, in imagination, he had fairly installed his person at court, as one of the King's lords in waiting, at least, if not a future secretary of state.

Having entered, he called aloud for his father. His father was a foolish vain old man, by name Mirza Bauker, which his friends had changed into Mirza *Bakhúr*, or 'the Mirza with an ass', and so he was commonly called, particularly when associated with his silly son. Having found him, Abdallah, in a state of considerable excitement, immediately imparted the great news, emphatically announcing that the King's favourite was to dine with him on the succeeding day.

"By your soul," said the son, "what I say is true. He told me so himself, and now we must see what is to be done."

"Done!" said the father, "we shall not be men if we do not give him an entertainment that will drive all the wind out of his head. He must speak of it to the King. We must be spoken of before the King; men must know what we are."

"They must, they must," said Abdallah; "after all, the blessed prophet was a man before he was a prophet. We also are men—we shall be something too. But what shall we do?"

"Do?" said the father; "we must invite people. There cannot be an entertainment without guests. We must invite Agar Joher, the goldsmith for one; may his house be ruined!—he shall see what the family of Mirza Bauker can do. He shall swallow his envy and his pride too, a thousand times and more, before we have done with him."

"Yes," said the son, "and that burnt father, Aga Yusuf, who thinks himself the greatest merchant of Ispahan; he must come, if it be only to make him burst with mortification. Then we must have the great men of the court. Why should we not ask the prime vizier himself? He went to Pûl Ali Beg, the great money-broker, why should he not come to us? We are richer than he is, with all his two golden pipes and five silver basins and ewers."

"You do not say amiss," rejoined the father; "if so, we must have fire-works and the *bazigers* or dancing-women."

"Hear my word," said the son, deep in thought, "we must have a new sofra, or table-cloth. I saw some beautiful ones in the bazaar, with excellent mottoes."

"What do you say," said the father, "are you mad? New sofras indeed! What becomes of our respectability and hospitality? You are young; don't you know that the older the table-cloth, the more respectable the family? I would not pick a grain of rice from off our old family cloth on any account. You are young, Abdallah, and do not know the world."

"So be it," said the young man, "if so it is; "but how is the dinner to be managed?"

"Stop—hear," said the old man. "At Pûl Ali Beg's dinner, there were only three pillos and one chilo to each khonchah.* Now we will have five pillos—by the beard of the blessed Ali; by the death of the accursed Yezid, we will have five pillos to each khonchah, and one roasted lamb. We will burn Pûl Ali Beg's father, and make Aga Yusuf's liver drop."

"Oh my, Sir, you have ordained right," said Abdallah, in a trance of joy. "Wonderful

* Pillo—dressed rice. Chilo—plainly boiled rice. Khonchah—a tray.

things have you said! Yes," looking thoughtful and counting his fingers, "let me see, that will make in all about fifty pillos and ten lambs—that will be enough to make the whole body of those unblessed merchants turn pale with envy, and every calumniating burnt father will choak with rage. But what of the sherbets? what of the fruit? what of the other dishes? Who will direct that part of the feast?"

"We must ask your mother," said Mirza Bauker. "Mashallah! she is famous at invention, and she will superintend the whole of the cookery."

"By the soul of my father," exclaimed Abdallah, "I will go seek Fatmeh. If there is an intellect to be found in the world, she possesses it. She understands every thing. She holds men in her power by the magic of her eye, and obliges them to do what she requires by the influence of her tongue."

Upon this, he betook himself to the anderoon, or women's apartments, in search of his wife, and there seated, he found her surrounded by her women, to one of whom she was teaching the art of embroidery. We have already

said that so eminent a beauty and so perfect a wife, both in character and intelligence, had not been known in Persia for ages; and although words, perhaps, may not convey an idea of her excellence, still we think it right to attempt to sketch her portrait. She was a little above the middle size, neither tall nor short, and maintained a most dignified demeanour, which was greatly enhanced by the natural grace of her manner; her head was set with peculiar symmetry upon a curving neck; and her face, which was oval, seemed to have been moulded in a form that no poet ever could have imagined, not even in his dreams, and which must have been the handy-work of peries or jins. Her skin was like the finest satin, her veins being seen to circulate like rivulets running through the conduits of a flower-garden. Her hair was of so beautiful a colour, that it required no *khenna* to keep it in order, and flowed from her head in inconvenient profusion. Who can describe her features? Her eyes were the seat of tenderness as well as of fire, her mouth bespoke virtue and truth, and there beamed from her

whole person such an atmosphere of loveliness, that no one ever approached her without feeling its influence. To all this perfection, and it would have been of little worth without it, was added such a power of good sense, sound judgment, and brilliant wit, that in speaking to her, the hearer forgot the woman, and listened as to a sage. Her conduct was a living exposition of her principles, which were founded upon every thing pure and virtuous. Her only fault, perhaps, was being too inflexible in pursuing that which was right, and in exacting too much from others in conformity to her own views.

Such then was Fatmeh, the beautiful, the virtuous and the accomplished wife to Abdallah, the silly, the vain, and the feeble of mind and of purpose. Delighted at having become acquainted with the royal jester, and almost out of his senses with joy at the prospect of receiving him as his guest, thus rendering himself conspicuous in the city by the banquet he was about to give, he could scarcely give utterance to his feelings when he appeared before his wife.

"Light of my eyes," he exclaimed, "give ear!—a wonderful piece of good luck has befallen us. We shall cease being of little importance in Ispahan, and you will never have to complain that your husband is nothing. I have struck up such a friendship with the Shah's companion and favourite, that he is about to honour our house with his presence, and we are to give him an entertainment. Fatmeh, my soul, you must give us the advantage of your knowledge and zeal. Tell us how shall we prepare for the feast?"

As soon as Fatmeh heard these words, seriousness overcast her countenance, and she said:

"Your slave is ever ready to obey the wishes of her lord and master, and who is she that should venture to object when he ordains? but let her venture to suggest, that mortification or even disgrace is sure to ensue, when they in humble life, seek to raise themselves to the level of their superiors. What good can you reap from becoming the friend of the royal favourite? He is a laugher at beards by profession, and can you expect that he will

spare yours? He may have mischievous views—no one can laugh much without heaving a sigh afterwards."

"What words are these?" said Abdallah. "Am I nothing after all? Are riches nothing? Is the possessor of beauty such as thine nothing? Fear not; why should not Abdallah raise himself in the world as well as those who throng the Shah's gate? You will see! you will see! Only let us give a good feast, and all will go well."

"Your slave," said Fatmeh, "has but one wish, and that is, that your house may prosper; but she hopes that as we are now, so we may be this time next year."

"Fear not," said her husband. "Please Allah, our luck is on the rise; let us begin our preparations."

Long were the consultations and great the efforts made to provide a fitting entertainment for the reception of the much celebrated Kaka Pembeh. There was one point which Fatmeh succeeded in carrying (much alas! to her future regret), and that was to restrict the nature of the entertainment to something

infinitely more private than the one which Abdallah and his father had originally planned, and this, indeed, suited the views of the Kaka himself, as will hereafter be seen.

Abdallah paid the compliment of requesting the jester to invite his own party, and at the hour appointed, proceeded in person to bid him to the feast. Honours, almost royal, were prepared for his reception, and a stepping-carpet of rich cloths and stuffs would actually have been spread for him by old Mirza Bauker, so intense was his capacity for adulation, had he not been warned that should such proceedings come to the Shah's ears, he might visit the perpetrators thereof with his vengeance. However, a separate musnud was doubled up purposely for the seat of the Kaka, and bowls of fruit were placed near it within reach of his hand. A messenger preceded the procession to announce its approach, when Mirza Bauker, at the head of the servants, advanced to the gate of the house in order to receive their illustrious guest as he dismounted from his horse. The Kaka came attended by one of the Shah's principal

eunuchs, by the head of the valets, (always a personage of consequence), by two *mastofies* or scribes of the royal gate, and by the Nasakchi Bashi, the chief executioner, who being a man of pleasure, brought with him a band of dancers and singers, accompanied by a confidential servant, who conveyed under his cloak several bottles of wine, a liquor which, in defiance of the law, was almost openly drank by the court as well as by the Shah himself, although denounced as an abomination by the priests.

Thus the entertainment from being an exhibition of the wealth of the house Mirza Bauker, dwindled in fact into a private drinking party. No sooner was the Kaka seated, than he poured forth such a rhapsody of praise and admiration at everything he saw, and all that had been done for his reception, that the head of Abdallah and of his silly old father almost touched the skies from excess of delight.

"Bah! bah! bah!" exclaimed the Jester, "are we on earth or in paradise, or have we been raised to the seventh heaven. By the soul of your son and by the beard of the Shah,"

said he addressing Mirza Bauker, "my head goes round and round with astonishment—see what a house! what fruits! what carpets—and see what a master of the house! Look too, what a father to the master of the house, and could we look back; (may the holy prophet take them into his holy keeping,) see what grand-fathers and great grand-fathers!"

All the accompanying guests did not fail to exclaim:

"Beli! beli! true, true you say right—we also are surprised and delighted."

Then turning to Abdallah he said,

"We are grateful, we are your servants—may the fortunes of your house flourish—may your shadow never be less—we! what dirt are we, compared to the shadow under which we sit! The Shah shall certainly be informed what a worthy subject he possesses in our excellent Abdallah Aga."

Upon this, the foolish man made the lowest prostrations, accompanied by a torrent of flattering speeches. The dinner being served, he seated himself at the very extremity of the carpet, in an attitude of humility, and occa-

sionally performed the offices of a servant. Little was said whilst eating was in progress, and that little was mostly in allusion to the sly and copious draughts of wine which were administered to the chief executioner, who excused himself from this deviation contrary to the ordinances of the law, by affirming that the doctors had ordered the prescribed liquor for his health.

"The Mollah Baski is a bad doctor," said one.

"May his father burn," said another. "He allows no wine though I be on my death bed" said a third.

And so they conversed until the dinner was over; when the wine was handed about freely and without disguise. The assembled faces in consequence of their potations began to look very red and discomposed.

It was at this stage of the entertainment, when the table-cloth had been rolled up and taken away, the kalian introduced, that the Kaka began to banter his host upon his wife.

"That gem of perfection," said he, "which

report announces to be so brilliant, is contained within the walls of this anderoon. Give ear," he continued, as with animation of voice and action he addressed those around him, Abdallah being within hearing, "the Khanum, is the mistress of such entire perfection, that had I two hundred eyes instead of two, I could never enough sate them with gazing upon her charms—had I five hundred ears, I could never sufficiently give ear to the harmony of her voice and the accents of her tongue—had I a million of lips, I could never enough kiss the print of her footsteps, so full of dignity and majesty is her whole person and demeanour. Such are the reports spread abroad of her perfections, which we, alas! poor ill-fated wretches! are only allowed to dream of, like one who scents a rose garden from the outer side of the wall, without being allowed to enter. There, there, is the man," pointing to Abdallah, "there is the happy man that possesses all, sees all, and hears all—he enjoys that which the Shah himself can never enjoy!"

Abdallah hearing these words, made an exclamation, expressive of his humility, but at the same time enjoyed transports of delight, whilst unwittingly he seconded the treacherous scheme of his wily guest. He longed to enhance the triumph of possession, by exhibiting to him that treasure and its perfections.

"What can your slave say?" said Abdallah with a downcast look, "our fate has thus been ordained, yes in truth your slave possesses a jewel of inestimable worth—she is not a being of this earth, she ought to be an inhabitant of that paradise for which we all are striving; she ought to be seen, and then men would own that I do not lie, but that I speak less than the truth."

"Let us see, let us see," exclaimed the Kaka with animation; "feasting after this manner," pointing to the departing delicacies is one thing, "but feasting the eye-sight is another—as you are a man, and as we all are friends together, as you love your soul, let our eyes be refreshed by the sight of this paragon of beauty. I, your slave will kiss your feet, I will be your sacrifice—do not say no."

"We are all hungry for the sight," said the Nasakchi.

"Let us see this rose, the scent thereof comes to us even through these walls," said the scribe.

The eunuch was the only one who appeared shocked at this trespass, upon what he esteemed his peculiar province.

The weak Abdallah, intoxicated with adulation and besotted with vanity, arose in ecstacy of joy, and darting forth from the apartment, betook himself with hastened, though uncertain steps, to that of his wife, his still more infatuated father following close behind him. When they reached her presence, it was there all at once, that they were struck by the folly of their errand, and they suddenly became aware of the entire dignity of Fatmeh's character. They stopped short and faltered in their speech, when she relieved them from their embarrassment by asking them what had happened.

"What supplication can we make," said Abdallah, "excepting this, that you will come and rejoice all our hearts by yielding

to our entreaties, and to the wishes of our guests."

"Yes," said Mirza Bauker, 'allow men to worship you—we are come with a supplication."

"My soul—light of my eyes," added Abdallah, "if you wish to raise our fortunes and make our heads touch the skies, allow our guests to depart satisfied—come with us into the *mejlis*, the assembly."

On hearing the import of these words, Fatmeh turned red and white by turns, her breast heaved, her eyes became fixed, she could scarcely speak from astonishment and disgust.

"For the love of Allah," at length she exclaimed, "are you both mad? what words are these? where have you been that you come to me with such a request. Has wine inflamed your minds, and has wind got into your brain instead of sense? I am your wife Abdallah Aga? am I your daughter-in-law Mirza Bauker? is it your wish to treat me as one infamous and debased? are we not in a Mahommedan coun-

try? is not this a Mussulman's harem? have we not a religion? a King and a government, and do you come requesting me to act as if none of those blessings existed. Go, go—shame, shame—I am your wife 'tis true, Abdallah, and whatever is lawful, whatever is dutiful, whatever is honest in the sight of God and man that will I do; but to go with you into a public assembly of men, there to shew my face like the wicked woman at the corner of the street, and there to be gazed upon—leered at—and thus inflict a stigma upon myself and on your house—that I cannot consent to do."

"But reflect," said her husband, "reflect, what a distinction it will be to have it known that Abdallah possesses a jewel, such as even Kings do not possess—what consideration he will acquire when it is said that he is the envy of the whole city! How much he will be courted, sought after and invited;—consider, Fatmeh, that you will be the cause of all this prosperity, of all this triumph over our enemies. Why the Shah himself will envy me! I shall be

called to court—I shall stand before the asylum of the world—think of that."

"We shall burn the fathers of all the enviers in the bazaar, and Mirza Bauker will not have his equal," said the old fool of a father.

"Shame! shame!" again exclaimed the indignant Fatmeh, "are these considerations to be put into competition with honour—with the express commands of our holy religion. There can be no exaltation allied with contempt—as well may you say that the thief who is suspended on a tree is exalted! I am your wife, and a husband has full power over her person —therefore, if you make use of force I must obey —but as you value the reputation of an upright man and a good Mussulman, let me entreat of you to desist from this your purpose."

Upon saying which, she seized upon a veil which was near at hand, threw it over her head, and in disgust seated herself in a distant corner of the room.

Father and son being foiled in their mission, departed with downcast looks, and with less haste than when they came.

"What shall we say?" said Abdallah to his

father on the way, "we return without caps to our heads."

"Say?" said Mirza Bauker, "say, although she is a beauty, she is yet still a woman, and that because we require her to go one way, she will go the other. What else can we say?"

"But we shall be laughed at," said the other.

"Let them laugh," rejoined the old man, "the laugh is on our side, for they have not succeeded in their wishes, whatever we may have done in ours."

Upon this they entered the room.

"What has happened?" roared out the King's jester. "Is it or is it not?"

"It is not," said Abdallah. "The weak one refuses to come."

"Well done, O little woman!" exclaimed the eunuch, his eye lighting up in ecstacy, on hearing an instance of virtue in his department, which, in his mind's eye, he almost esteemed to be a miracle. "Wonderful weak one must she be! In truth, in truth, the Shah does not possess such a treasure—to be beautiful, and to resist the temptation of exhibiting that

beauty! Such virtue is unknown! As you love your eyes," said he, addressing Abdallah, "you must allow me to see her, in order that I may make a report to the asylum of the universe. I can never be denied access to any *anderoon*."

"No more can I," exclaimed Cottonwool. "See this hump. See this dog-face of mine. I may be allowed to run loose among all the harems in Ispahan, without doing any harm, except, perhaps, scaring the women out of their wits; for your slave is not counted among men. With your permission," pointing to the eunuch, "this aga and I will accompany you to pay our respects to this miracle of womankind. The Shah must not remain in ignorance of the existence of one so exalted, and you, Abdallah Aga, you must be duly honoured too. Rise—let us go."

The bewildered host was taken so unawares by this request, that he immediately led the way, followed by the Kaka and the royal eunuch, his father bringing up the rear, very much to the amusement of the remainder of the guests, who being intimately acquainted with the wiles

and the vocation of the Kaka, could perceive that all this proceeding, apparently so unpremeditated, had been planned and pre-arranged.

Fatmeh having, as she supposed, got rid of the importunities of her husband, had taken off her veil, and quietly resumed her usual avocations, when suddenly the door of her apartment was thrown open, and as suddenly appeared before her the Kaka, followed by the eunuch, Abdallah, and her father-in-law. Her first impulse was to scream and seek her veil; not, however, before the intruders had had full time to survey the beauties of her person and the charms of her incomparable face. She then covered herself over with that garment, and turning her back upon her visitors, seated herself in a corner, without deigning to utter a word.

"Forgive us," said the Kaka, entirely charmed by what he had seen, "forgive us, O beautiful and incomparable lady, for this intrusion; but let our humble deformities plead in our favour. You see before you as ugly and disgusting an object as you can well require; one whose hump makes it doubtful whether he approaches you back foremost or stomach fore-

most—one whose eye cares not for its fellow, but looks whithersoever it pleases without asking permission of its neighbour—one whose legs are always across, sitting or standing, and whose knees must kneel, whether he be humble or whether he be arrogant. And in his companion, he humbly presents you one, who boasts of having already frightened seven children into fits by his hideousness; who is of less account in a harem than a masculine cat, and who enjoys the sentiment of hate with the same devotedness that others enjoy that of love. Look upon us, therefore, O lady without compare, and teach us, by deigning to cast an eye upon us, properly to demean ourselves as two of the choicest specimens of the scum of this our blessed earth."

Fatmeh, who was as little prepared for the appearance of such a being, as she was for the strange speech with which he had introduced himself and his companion, could scarcely keep her gravity, as she eyed them both from the corner of her veil. She allowed a pause to intervene, when she said:

"Sirs, in whatever light you may choose to view the matter, you must allow that a visit such as this is quite unusual, and that, however, your humble slave may be flattered by the manner in which you have been pleased to express yourself, and gratified by the opinion you entertain of her poor merits, still she must protest against so unheard of an act, and request you to retire."

Abdallah, taking courage by the composure of her manner, then said:

"Whatever may be the evil of this proceeding, it is annulled by the presence of your husband and father-in-law. By my soul and by your death, these my friends, in coming hither, afford me a proof of their affection, and through their means, my good fortune will *Inshallah* be on the rise. Therefore, throw off your veil, and let them depart satisfied. Milord eunuch here, is one who specially stands before the asylum of the world, comptrolling the royal harem and all the faces it contains, without the intervention of veils; therefore what harm can there be in unveiling before him?"

"May my lips kiss the sole of your slippers! may the dust of your threshold be ointment for my eyes!" exclaimed the Kaka, inflamed to admiration by the beauty of the tones of Fatmeh's voice, and the fascination of her manner. "Should this flower of the harem deign to extend the prolongation of my life, by infusing the exhalations of her beauty into my unworthy person, I will never cease being grateful for her condescension."

"Let us see your face, O my lady!" said the eunuch, using language common to his profession. "What words are these? Delay is now affectation. We, who are your lawful guardians, we give you leave—there is no harm done; collect your fears into a heap and blow them from you."

With such encouragement as this, Fatmeh, seeing in fact nothing before her, but two creatures in form scarcely human, at length, was prevailed upon to draw off her veil, and then turning her face modestly towards them, allowed them to gaze upon her charms at their leisure.

The Kaka's eyes glistened with admiration, and in his mind he foresaw the success he was about to obtain in the good graces of the sovereign, for having brought to light so wonderful a specimen of beauty and wit.

"*Mashallah! Mashallah!*" he exclaimed, again and again. "May the father of all destiny be burnt, for having kept such riches from the harem of the King of Kings. Mashallah! You, Abdallah Aga! you ought to be made the vizier of the state, and empower your bewitching fairy to rule over the hearts of man."

As for the eunuch, he eyed the beautiful person before him, not with a feeling of admiration, but with the eye of envy, wishing to find such fault, that he might depart satisfied she was not superior to those of the Shah's beauties, over whom he had the charge. "She is not amiss! There is nothing to say against her! In truth she has merit! Splendid she is, 'tis true, but she may fall away. Should the Shah gain a sight of her, it may go ill with us." These, and such like observations, passed through his mind as he gazed upon her, whilst

in truth he would willingly have given his eyes to be the means of presenting her to his royal master.

At length the interview drew to a close, and Kaka Pembeh, having accomplished the object he had in view in becoming the guest of Abdallah, returned to his home quite overjoyed with his success. As he placed his foot in the stirrup, on leaving Abdallah's house, he did not cease to make protestations of friendship, returning him thanks for the handsome manner in which he had been entertained, hinting that this would not be the last time he should call upon him for hospitality, particularly as he had a friend, one high at court, whom he wished to introduce to his notice.

Abdallah, who actually held the stirrup as he mounted, avowed himself the humblest of his slaves, whose head had been made to touch the skies by this stretch of his condescension. When the whole party was fairly gone, he exclaimed to his father:

"By the soul of the Shah, I shall be allowed to stand in the royal presence at the next festival of Norooz; and who knows, perhaps we may both of us be invested with dresses of

honour. This the Kaka told me in confidence; in the mean while he promises to bring to us one of the greatest men of the court, who is as intimate with the Shah as it is possible for one man to be with another. Our luck is on the rise. I will defile the grave of Pûl Ali Beg's father."

"We will show the world," said the vain-glorious old man, "that the house of Mirza Bauker has not its equal in the bazaar."

The King's jester was not slow in making his proceedings known to his royal master. He long had felt that something more than mere buffoonery was necessary to excite his mind, and draw it away from that power of melancholy which habitually oppressed it, and he had now discovered precisely the sort of person, in the wife of Abdallah, one likely to promote this object, and acquire entire ascendancy over him. This circumstance he communicated to the grand vizier, who, although a very rigid Mussulman himself, and singularly alive to the sanctity of the harem, still could not help encouraging him to proceed, particularly as he could quiet his conscience, by asserting that when a husband was party concerned

in introducing others to his wife, he must be held responsible for the consequences.

On the morning subsequent to Abdallah's entertainment, the Kaka having arrayed himself in his court dress, proceeded to the private apartments of the Shah, and being one of those privileged to stand before the presence without introduction, entering he made his obeisance, as usual, without any particular notice being taken of him. However, after a while, he lifted up his voice, and said:

"I have a petition to make."

His Majesty, who guessed the nature of his communication, ordered every one else to quit his presence, and then said:

"What is the news? Speak?"

"As I am your sacrifice," said the Kaka, "your slave has seen strange things—things worthy the observation of the King of Kings."

"What has happened? What things?" said the Shah. "Should you throw unmeaning words into the air, open well your eyes, for this is a day in which the King enjoys no spirits."

"By the salt of the King!—by his own soul!—by his royal ancestors!—there I have

said it—what your slave is about to advance is the truth. There is not a lie in the whole story and he has witnesses, should it be necessary, to prove what he asserts."

"Speak on," said the Shah.

"May my head fall," said the Kaka, "if what I saw last night be not true, and fitted for the service of the King. This less than the least; having heard that one Abdallah, son of Mirza Bauker, a merchant trading to Bassora, had returned from that city, bringing with him a maiden more beautiful than any thing that had ever been seen in our days, more full of wit, and sparkling with salt of every kind, I thought it right for the service of the Shah to become acquainted with him, saying to myself, 'What right has a burnt father to possess that which only belongs to the Shah of Shahs?' Your slave did become acquainted with him, and by the salt which I eat, and by the King's head I swear, that a more considerable ass (always saving your royal presence) was never seen. One wish he has, and one only wish, and that is to be allowed to stand in the presence of the world's centre. He is wealthy; he also pos-

sesses one essential ass in a father, Mirza Bauker by name, who only lives to rub his forehead against the imperial threshold. May I be your sacrifice, but I lost no time in making play under their beards. In two words, then, your slave has succeeded in eating their bread, and by the head of the King, by words ill or well spoken, by praises ill or well bestowed, he made them both press upon him a visit, to survey this maiden without an equal."

"Well," said the Shah, excited by what he heard, "well, what happened? Did you see her? What is she like?"

"It is not for a thing like your slave to boast what he has seen," said the Kaka, "but in truth this I may say—and I swear it by the King's head, by the royal jika, and by my own death—that such a thing, composed of flesh and blood, has not been seen in Persia since the days of Jemsheed. Leila what? Shireen what? They are both filth compared to her. Such a person—such eyes—such skin—such colouring—such a waist! No; the like was never seen! And then such incomparable wit. She says more witty things in a minute, than all

the sages of the King's gate in a year. Who was Hafiz? Who was Nizami? Who was Saadi? She is them altogether. In truth, then, she is only fit for the royal harem? There she must go. Let the Centre of the Universe cut his slave's tongue out, but till that happens he can never cease to speak of her perfections."

Shah Abbas was not slow in catching the enthusiasm which filled the breast of his jester, as he continued extolling the beauties of Abdallah's wife, although, in truth, his Majesty remained impressed with the idea that this prodigy was in no other manner connected with the young merchant than by the ties of slavery. The Kaka had purposely so described her, lest the Shah, in his desire to uphold the sacred character of the harem, should refuse to proceed further in the business; but having sufficiently awakened the curiosity of his master into a desire to see her, he immediately unfolded the scheme he had already planned of a second visit. Accordingly, on that very night, the Shah agreed to disguise himself as one belonging to the royal household, and to accom-

pany his jester to the house of Abdallah, without giving him any previous notice, in order that no notoriety might be attached to the visit.

Shah Abbas was a handsome man, with a round face, aquiline nose, and sharp piercing eyes. In his day it was the fashion to clip the beard short, wearing the mustachios long, different to the custom of the present time, when no beard can be too copious. His face was well known, for he never refused to show himself to his people; consequently, he deemed it necessary, in this instance, to disguise himself by wearing some head-dress, which would change the character of his usual appearance. Having adopted a large gold brocade turban, and a costume common to courtiers and khans, he issued from his palace, at the dusk of the evening, accompanied by Cottonwool, and followed at a short distance by a trusty executioner, who on such like expeditions was so stationed as to be ready to act upon the first emergency.

They quietly bent their way to Abdallah's house, and when there, knocked at the door,

which, although standing open during the day, was closed at night. As soon as the servant, by the light of a lantern, discovered the Kaka, he immediately ran in all haste to inform his master, who was solacing himself in the anderoon with the society of his beautiful wife.

"What has happened?" said he, as soon as he perceived his servant standing before him breathless from haste.

"By your life," said the man, "the great Kaka, who was here last night, has again appeared, followed by another aga, and requests to see you."

Fatmeh, who heard these words, did not know what countenance to keep, amused on the one hand, by the recollection of the ridiculous appearance of her husband's new friend, and on the other, fearful lest he should again require to be admitted into the harem. Abdallah, on the other hand, received the news with unmixed joy.

"He has brought me one of the great men of the court," he exclaimed. "See! see!—did I not say our luck was on the rise?"

Then ordering lights to be placed in the

divan khaneh, or public room, he hastened with the utmost speed to receive his guests. He rushed forward to Cottonwood, and bowing low before him, without taking the least notice of the King, exclaimed,

"You have done me honour—I am your slave—your steps are fortunate! You have no illness, let us hope? Enter, in the name of Allah. Forgive the meanness of the habitation of your slave. Why did you not give me notice of your arrival? we would have prepared for your reception. Who am I, that I should be thus honoured?"

And thus did he proceed in a rhapsody of welcome and compliments, till he could scarcely speak for want of breath. Abdallah then observing the unbounded respect which the Kaka paid to his companion, became frightened at his own want of deference, and made similar demonstrations of compliment and adulation, until at length he succeeded in seating them in his receiving-room.

Abdallah would have placed the Kaka in the seat of honour; but when he perceived that the stranger, without the smallest hesitation, took

upon himself the distinction due to the highest rank, he became puzzled how to behave, lest in bestowing too much attention upon the one, he should displease the other. He was about ordering refreshments to be brought, when the Kaka said:

"Abdallah Aga! If you are a man, and would give pleasure to your guests, let us repair to your anderoon. I speak as your friend; and by the King's head I swear, that in so doing you will secure an act of condescension which the greatest man in the kingdom cannot secure. Comport yourself as if the Shah himself were here, and do not fear."

The bewildered man, scarcely knowing whether he was walking in air or on earth, afraid on the one hand that Fatmeh would exhibit her indignation in some unbecoming manner, and apprehensive on the other of offending his friend, the Kaka, and particularly the stranger, of whom he began to stand in serious awe, at length exclaimed:

"*Becheshm*—by my eyes!—upon my head be it—I am your sacrifice. Whatever you command, your slave will do. I will run to

make preparations. Forgive us. Had we but been made aware of this honour"—

And he would have left his visitors to go to prepare his wife, had not the wily Kaka foreseen, should they not take Fatmeh unawares, they might not see her at all, said:

"Stay—stay—we require no preparations; we will proceed with you,"—when both rising, they followed the scarcely willing Abdallah into his own sacred retreat.

Fatmeh, who had become wise from experience, no sooner saw her husband run to receive the Kaka and the stranger, than she called for her veil, and covered herself therewith from head to foot, as if she were about to appear in the streets, thus preparing herself for the worst; and when she heard footsteps approach, she quitted her apartment in which she usually sat, and betook herself to another adjoining.

Abdallah, perceiving that his wife had fled, began to make apologies, and requesting his guests to be seated, said that he would seek and conduct her before them. With great diffi-

culty he persuaded her to follow him, but no words would induce her to take off her veil. Long had the Kaka and his companion to wait, and many were the King's expressions of surprise, that a mere slave should be so refractory to the orders of her master. At length she entered the room, keeping herself so closely concealed that no one part of her person, not even the tip of a finger, could be perceived. The Kaka, seeing that nothing could be done without his interference, and having received permission from the Shah to put himself forward, advanced towards her, and touching the ground with his hand, and then bringing it to his lips, exclaimed :

"What can your slave say? You are like the loadstone. I am the bit of metal that you have attracted—and here is another," pointing to the Shah. "You make slaves of mankind. We have been ordered to see and ascertain whether the words which your humble slave has spoken before the Asylum of the Universe, the Shah of this great country, be true or not. Impressed by what he saw last night, he ventured to assert

that in the royal harem, and, indeed, throughout Persia, not to mention the whole world, there cannot and does not exist one of charms so unrivalled, and of wit so ready and universal, as you, O lady, most fair—most unequalled. Let this Aga, pointing to the Shah, be my witness—allow him to judge—allow him to take the report of my assertion to the ears of his Majesty; and unless you require the diminution of my ears, the curtailment of my nose, or the loan of one of my eyes, exhibit the goodness of your heart, by divesting yourself of that cruel and hateful veil. You will thus protect your slave from harm, and enjoy yourself immortal glory."

"Sir," said Fatmeh, the tones of her voice bewitching to the ear, thrilling through the very hearts of her auditors; "Sir, if it hath pleased Heaven to bestow the beauty and charms of person to your slave which you have been pleased to describe, she must deplore the possession of them as her greatest misfortune, if they are to be the cause of seducing her from what she knows and feels to be her duty.

Whatever they may be, were she a thousand times more beautiful, were she one of the blessed houris herself, such charms, when once they belong to another, can no longer belong to herself. She is slave to the man whom destiny has made her master. His will is her law. Whilst she is ready to throw off her veil, should he positively command her, yet so imperative are the obligations of her religion, and the received customs of decency, that she is quite sure he never would require her to disgrace her sex, and his own family, by issuing an order which is only intended to satisfy the idle curiosity of strangers."

Upon this, she was about turning to go away, when the Shah, enraptured by her voice, her manner, and the grace of her movements, cried:

"Stay, for the sake of Allah, stay. You have heard the words of Kaka Pembeh, and we must hope they will have some effect upon you. Since the real object of our coming hither is to please the Shah—will not that have some effect upon your determination?"

"Forgive me if I say," said Fatmeh, "that

I fear under this request there lieth deceit. What can so great a monarch care for one so lowly as your slave? He who possesses, in right of his power, all the beauty which his immense kingdom can bestow, and who enslaves the hearts of his subjects by his goodness and munificence, will scarcely condescend to look into the anderoon of individuals of our humble station. No, Sir Kaka, and you, Sir stranger, let me entreat of you to allow me to retire, and be not angry if I can in no wise comply with your wishes."

"One word morè," said the monarch, in haste and with great animation. "Suppose you were to receive an order from the Shah himself, would you obey?"

"What words are these?" answered Fatmeh. "What can the Shah have to seek in this house?—it is useless to affirm that we are all his slaves, over whom he has the power of life and death, and, therefore, an anderoon has no walls for him; but this I say, that even were he present, such is my opinion of his justice, that he never would command

that which is contrary to good morals and decency."

Shah Abbas was by this time quite entranced with the fascinations of the beautiful woman, though he had not seen her face, and seeing that she was determined to depart, notwithstanding the tacit entreaties of her husband, who was in so bewildered a state, that he neither knew what to do or say, at length exclaimed, with an authoritative tone and manner:

"In the name of the Shah then, I order you to stay. I am the Shah."

At these words, all present fell at his feet; his person now was not to be mistaken, for there is that in despotic kings which can never be concealed, and the scene which ensued is easier to be imagined than described. Abdallah almost fainted away between the extremes of fear and joy—fear lest he might have done something worthy of death—joy at the great and inexpressible honour of seeing the King, in person, under his roof. Fatmeh was overpowered by fear and apprehension; for quick as a shock of

electricity, she alas ! felt what alone could be the motive which had conducted him hither, and remained prostrate until the Shah advanced and lifting her up, requested her, at the same time, in gentle and encouraging accents to retire, and return to him unveiled. His Majesty then ordered Abdallah to accompany her, and to bring her back to him so soon as she would be ready to appear.

"See what you have done!" said the dejected wife to her husband when they were left together. "Did not I tell you that the visit of that intriguing hump-back would end in misfortune?"

"In misfortune!" exclaimed Abdallah, "in misfortune do you say? As you live, find the man in Ispahan who has ever been half so much honoured as I. Misfortune do you say? On the contrary, call it joy—call it good destiny. Your husband will be somebody now; he will have a footing at court; men will bow the head to him; he will stand before the King."

"Are you so blind, Abdallah," cried his wife, in anger, "as not to perceive the real

object of these attentions and of these visits. I tell you that your wife will be dishonoured; you are preparing every mischief for your house, by your vanity and love of consideration. I, a poor weak woman, how am I to resist, if I be not supported by him who ought to support me?"

"Fear not," said Abdallah, "and make haste. Go deck yourself in your best, fresh paint your eyes and twist your curls. Let us do honour to our visitor, and come quickly that we may fall at his feet. And as you love my soul, keep your eyes open, and make all the play you can with that tongue and those eyes of yours."

Fatmeh, surprized, excited, and disgusted with the want of proper feeling in her husband, was not long in taking off her veil, putting on a suitable dress, and rejoining her husband. He then took her by the hand and led her straight before the Shah.

When Shah Abbas perceived her, his eyes became rivetted by the brilliancy of her beauty. He could not speak from astonishment, and he gazed like one who had never seen beauty

efore. The Kaka watched the effect pro-luced upon his royal master with intense nterest, and when he perceived how much he was smitten, he could scarcely contain his raptures at the success which had followed his schemes. His cunning eyes glanced first at the King and then at Fatmeh, as a serpent may be seen to watch his prey before he effectually darts upon it.

"Report has not said enough," said the enamoured King. "We are all astonishment! Lady, be seated," he said, addressing Fatmeh, "and allow your humble slave to gaze upon charms, the like to which, hitherto are unknown to his eyes."

Upon saying this, he insisted upon her being seated, whilst her husband stood bye, wrapt in stolid satisfaction and stupid insensibility, his heart almost beating into his very mouth. Fatmeh, on the contrary, quickly alive to the disgrace of the position in which she was placed, could scarcely retain the expression of her anger and her tears. At the same time, having all proper respect for the character of the great monarch who was seated

near her, she did her best to contain her real emotions, and shewed her deference by maintaining silence, accompanied by down-cast retiring looks.

We will not repeat the conversation that took place between the Shah and Fatmeh, for it may be better imagined than described, consisting, on the part of the Shah, of attempts to make her elicit that wit and agreeableness for which she was celebrated, and she on her part, abstaining from pronouncing any thing beyond expressions of respect and devotion. The interview lasted long, for the enamoured Abbas could not draw himself away from attractions such as those before him. He avowed the admiration with which she had inspired him, and placed before her views of ambition, which alone would have been sufficient to seduce any ordinary mortal from the paths of rectitude. But Fatmeh was an extraordinary woman; in her own breast, she would listen to no compromise with duty; virtue was the only course she would pursue, and she received with cold respect and unbroken silence, every advance made to her. At length, the King, in

despair of moving her heart, arose, and with the same secrecy that he came, so he returned, but determined in his own breast to leave nothing undone by which he might secure this gem for himself, and place it in his harem, as the ornament, delight and consolation of his hours of retirement. The first step towards obtaining this end, was sending presents of the most costly description to Abdallah's house. Every thing that could flatter the vanity of woman and excite her cupidity, was presented to her, accompanied by such demonstrations of respect and devotion, as could only reside in the breast of a devoted lover. The next step, was to heap honours and distinctions upon the husband.

On the morning that succeeded the interview in the harem, the Kaka in person brought a magnificent dress of honour, consisting of a brocade vest, shawls of cashmere, a turban adorned with a jewel, a sword, a diamond-headed dagger—all of which were presented to Abdallah on the part of the Shah, and having

clothed himself therewith, he was straightway conducted to the royal presence.

What words can describe the excess of this foolish man's vanity, and the workings of his secret joy! His old father, too, who can with patience speak of his follies! They both seemed to have lost their wits. Mounted on a finely caparisoned horse, Abdallah proceeded to pay his court to the Shah, and rode in state along the streets and bazaars, through which he hitherto had walked, his back pompously curved, his eye averted, and his features thrown into a cast of conscious superiority, flattering himself that for the future he was called upon to act a new part, and resolving, within his breast, that he would make his former companions feel that he no more belonged to them. But, although his pride was great, yet it was nothing compared to the astonishment which his sudden elevation produced, both in the bazaar and at court.

"How is this?" said one; "what can that double-dotted ass, Abdallah, have done, to become thus distinguished?"

"Don't you know," answered a second, "he has brought the most beautiful of wives from Basora, and the Shah went in disguise to inspect her."

"So! is it?" said the other; "then he is a cleverer merchant than I took him for—we shall all be looking out for handsome wives."

"It is that vile procurer, the Kaka, who is the agent," said a third. "He is a misfortune. May his house be ruined!"

"And what does Mirza *Bakhûr* say? is he to have a kalaat and make the obeisance?" inquired another. "He is the father and grandfather of asses, and that is enough for him! He eats more dirt in a day, than all Ispahan does in a year. See, see! where good fortune is gone to build her nest. We, poor devils—we work with the sweat of our brows, and esteem ourselves lucky if our gains, at the end of the year, keep us alive and are not taken from us, whilst here is a burnt father, who, with scarcely enough wit to keep the bastinado from his feet, receives rich presents, wears a golden coat, and stands among nobles under the

shade of the throne. Wonderful thing is destiny!"

Such was the effect produced in the bazaar. At court, and at the King's gate, it excited still more wonderment.

"For the love of Allah, who was that piece of vulgarity with a kalaat, who was presented this morning to the King?" said the chief master of the ceremonies, as he sat in the assembly at the King's gate. "This is a piece of handy work that smells of brother Cottonwool."

"And if it does smell of Cottonwool," said the Kaka in person, in quick retort, "let us hope that it may not be offensive. It is better that the asylum of the world should be taken up in bestowing dresses of honour than in burning the souls of his subjects."

"By your head and by my death," exclaimed one of the royal officers, a fop and a libertine, addressing the chief master of the ceremonies; "you had to present a fellow that was never before mounted upon a high-heeled shoe, and who never wore red cloth stockings before—you might as well make a

buffalo perform a bow. He ought to sell his wife cheap, if he acquires his honours thus easily."

"Truly spoke the Kaka," said a scribe belonging to the grandvizier, "when he asserted that every thing ought to be done to preserve the country from the effects of the Shah's melancholy. What are the vulgar airs of a fool, when compared with the security of our necks?"

"Did you ever see so awkward an exhibition as the fellow made?" said another. "When the King of Kings said, 'you are welcome,' instead of holding his tongue, the ass said, 'may your shadow never be less'—a camel-driver would have done better."

"Let him alone, let him alone," exclaimed the Kaka, chuckling with exultation; "he did very well for a poor devil who is about losing his wife. Our heads will be all the better for it too. Let us hope that it will give encouragement to those burnt fathers, the merchants, to speculate in such like commodities for the future, and make a good market of the royal

affections. 'Tis better the King should love than hate."

Thus did the conversation flow after the usual levee or selam of the day had taken place, whilst Abdallah retraced his steps to his own house, decked with the gaudy trappings of his kalaat, and more pleased with his person than was the jay strutting about with the plumage of the peacock. When he reached his own gate, he walked into the house with a stately step, and presented himself to his anxious wife, who did not cease to ponder over the predicament into which his weakness, vanity, and imbecility had thrown her. So soon as he appeared, she invited him into her private room, and seating herself near him, said, in a most serious tone:

"Abdallah, I have many things to say to you."

"What more than *mobarek*, or happiness attend you, can you have to say to me on such a day as this?" said he. "I swear by your bright eyes, that the Shah received me with the affection of a brother. We are one—what would you have more?"

"I have this to say," said Fatmeh, "that, in consequence of your conduct, ruin will overtake your house, and that after being the laughing-stock of the world, you will become its outcast. The friendship of a King is as dangerous as is the shelter of a tree in a storm. I tell you what, Abdallah, the Shah will do his utmost to seduce your wife from you. Of that be certain, and, moreover, she wishes to be informed whether she is to confide in the protection of her husband or not. She requires a solemn answer."

"What are you saying? what words are these?" exclaimed Abdallah, making light of her serious appeal. "Is not the Shah my friend? Wherefore did he send me this kalaat? And is the Kaka nothing? He who would cut his beard off to give me pleasure. What can the Shah want with you, when he posesses a whole harem full of women—women without their equals? Go, go—do not fear. Keep your apprehensions to yourself, and you will see Abdallah a vizier of state before another moon be expired. Go—go."

Upon which, his brain inflated with

vanity, and his heart dried up with selfishness, he left his wife to air his grandeur among his associates, and there to receive the expression of their derision and contempt.

Fatmeh was mortified and disgusted at the result of her interview with her husband. Her sagacity, as well as the quickness of woman's instinct, had more than apprized her what were the views of Shah Abbas upon herself, and from the specimen which she had just experienced of Abdallah's insensibility, she came to the conclusion that she could trust to no one for the protection of her honour, but herself. Long she pondered—long she reflected upon the best line of conduct to pursue. She was determined not to become a debased woman; death, she agreed, in her inmost mind, were preferable, and happen what might, she was resolved never to lose her own self-esteem. She still had hope, should the Shah seek a second interview with her, (which she made no doubt he would,) that her entreaties, and an appeal to his better feelings, might screen her from impending harm, but should he persist, and seeing the imbecility of

her husband's conduct, she was afraid that he would, she was resolved to use all her energies to discover how she could best effect her escape.

The Shah, in truth, did not fail on that very same night, (so greatly enamoured was he), accompanied by the Kaka and his trusty executioner, to visit Abdallah a second time, in a similar manner and under a similar disguise as on the first occasion. Fatmeh received him with renewed demonstrations of respect, although with a serious and composed manner, yet she did not shrink from the interview, nor did she make the least attempt to raise unnecessary difficulties, by adhering to her veil, or insisting upon otherwise keeping up the dignity of the harem. She acknowledged that the Shah had a right to inspect the faces of his subjects, either men or women, and, therefore, her docility in this respect, which the Shah, in his inmost heart, took for a devise to make herself agreeable to him, was a means of accelerating the agitation of the subject she was anxious to discuss.

As soon as they were seated, to the King's surprise, Fatmeh desired they might be left alone, and when the Kaka and her husband quitted the room, she arose, and making a profound obeisance, said:

"I am your sacrifice—I am the humblest of the slaves of the asylum of the world, and as such I beg leave to throw myself upon his mercy, and make known this my petition. In all times, from the days of our ancient monarchies, when we worshipped fire, to this present time, when we worship one true and only Allah, the harem has been held sacred. No King, however despotic, has ever invaded its sanctity with impunity. You, O King, are one of the greatest of our monarchs—you have always been looked upon as the guardian and protector of our institutions, and of none more so than the sanctity of the harem. Why, then, let your slave in all humility ask, why has your Majesty deviated from your admirable rule of conduct in the single instance of your slave's house? What has she or her husband ever done to bring this misfortune on their heads?"

"Husband!" exclaimed the Shah. "We have been informed that you were not Abdallah's wife, but his slave. How is this?"

"Then your Majesty has been basely deceived," said Fatmeh, with spirit. "Oh, change, then, your line of conduct. Let this act of deceit redound to her advantage, in order that the consequences of it may fall upon the head of the deceiver."

The King was at first shaken in his object by this unexpected appeal, and he felt angry at the deceit practised upon him; but, in fact, he was a great deal too much enslaved to recede, and the feeling of anger was very transient. He determined not to forego advantages which he felt conscious of possessing, and, therefore, although he at first confined himself to general professions of his love for justice, and his wish to respect the institutions of his country, yet very soon his passion obtained the supremacy, and he then poured forth his sentiments in a rhapsody common to all lovers, since love was a passion.

Fatmeh, finding that her appeal had been

made in vain, and that all her worst fears were verified, then entreated for a week's delay ere she gave an answer to the Shah's proposals. He had urged his suit in a manner difficult to be resisted; for he offered to make her the head of his harem, to sacrifice every other woman to her, and hinted that a Shah's wishes were not to be rejected with impunity. Fatmeh felt that to resist such power was impossible, and that her best resource would consist in acquiring time, during which she might mature her scheme for escape.

To her request, the Shah acceded, and glad was he to do so, although he willingly would, at that very moment, have eloped with her. But now that he had discovered he was about to seduce a wife, and not receive a slave, from one of his subjects, he thought it fitting to screen himself from the hatred which such an act of tyranny would not fail to awaken, by conducting the whole affair in as quiet a manner as possible. Accordingly, after having presented Fatmeh with a ring of immense value, and again receiving her promise that in seven

days time she would communicate her ultimate resolve, he left the house.

The courageous woman, strong in her virtue, without hesitating a moment, determined upon what course to pursue. She immediately sat down and wrote a letter. To her brother, a young man who lived in Shiraz, and was a sword cutler by trade. They were mutually attached, and she could depend upon him as she could upon herself. Without mentioning the peculiarities of the case, she informed him that she was in imminent danger of being driven to despair, and requested him, upon receipt of this letter, to depart as secretly as he could from Shiraz, and to come to her rescue. She planned the whole of his operations—how, when, and where he was to alight—and enjoined the greatest prudence, as well as the greatest secrecy, in every step he took. She then dispatched it by a trustworthy messenger, who was to return immediately with the answer.

Having done this, she duly warned her husband of the risk he was about to undergo of

seeing himself and his house ruined, and told him truly and honestly all that had taken place between herself and the Shah. His infatuation was complete. He refused to listen to any thing she had to say, but inflated with his honors, and swelling with importance, he gave himself all the airs of one who had already attained the highest eminence in the state. Neither would his foolish old father listen to her, although she roundly informed him of the steps which the Shah was taking to seduce her from her home.

At length, the seventh day came, and with it the answer from her brother, who informed her that he would be at the prescribed spot at Ispahan, two days after the arrival of the messenger. This piece of news gave her animation and invigorated her courage, and when the eunuch, on the part of the Shah, came to receive her orders as to the time when she would wish to take possession of her apartments in the palace, she was ready to give him her answer and directions. She requested him to convey a message to the Shah to this effect—that

she was prepared to proceed immediately to the palace, provided that for three successive days she remained totally and entirely undisturbed and unvisited; during which, she should enjoy the privilege of life or death, with full power to command the services of the officers of justice, and that without giving an account of her actions to any person except the Shah.

The eunuch to whom she confided this message, was the same who had accompanied the Kaka on the first night of his visit; and as he was ambitious of securing the good graces of one, whom he foresaw would be paramount in the seraglio, he did his utmost, when conveying it to his royal master, to see that the wishes it contained were fulfilled. It was unconditionally granted, for the Shah could set no bounds to his love and admiration; in addition to looking upon her as the most perfect combination of beauty and charm, he esteemed her as a prodigy of wisdom and sagacity.

The eunuch, therefore, was enjoined immediately to return, and to take with him a hand-

some retinue of servants, in order that she might be conducted to the palace with all possible honour, and to refuse nothing which she might desire.

Accordingly, a horse magnificently caparisoned from the royal stables, stood at the gate of Abdallah's house, whilst the eunuch himself on foot, escorted by a crowd of servants, appeared to announce that all was ready.

Abdallah having been informed to what extent his gate was honoured, was more than ever entranced with pleasure. He proceeded to congratulate Fatmeh on her prospects, and, in his blindness, seemed to think that this, her visit to the royal harem, was immediately to be productive of increased honours to himself. She received him with coldness and severity. She felt that it was now too late to open his eyes to the truth, and that having proceeded thus far in a scheme which had become her only chance of escaping from infamy, she could not reveal it to him without danger to the existence of all parties concerned. She merely observed, when quitting his house,

"Abdallah Aga, whatever happens, take the whole blame to yourself. May Allah receive you into his holy keeping!"

Upon which, assisted by the eunuch, she mounted the horse prepared for her, and pursued her way to the royal palace.

No sooner had she got there, than she took possession of her apartments, but shunned to make herself known to the crowd of brilliant female attendants that had been provided for her. To the astonishment of all, she then issued directions to the same eunuch who had attended her, to order a band of executioners, provided with a felek and bastinadoing sticks, to be in readiness at her call. She waited until the close of day, and then sent an officer of the household to Kaka Pembeh, with an order that he should appear before her.

He readily came, expecting to be the first to receive some rich and liberal testimony of her gratitude for the brilliant position in which she had been placed. His face bespoke satisfaction—his words intimacy and freedom. But what was his surprise, when entering the room in which she sat, acting up to the dignity of a

Queen, not to be invited to sit, but on the contrary, ordered to stand at a distance.

Fatmeh then drawing herself up and throwing the utmost severity into her manner and voice said :

" If you think, base man, that I have required your presence in order to thank you for the elevated position in which you now see me, you are fatally mistaken—on the contrary, you have grossly and irrevocably insulted me. To you and you only, am I indebted for the degradation of becoming a King's mistress instead of being an honest man's wife. Learn, sir, that much as I prized being the one, so much do I abhor becoming the other. You have insidiously taken advantage of my husband's weakness to gain your own ends—because I am a weak and frail woman, is that a reason why I should be made the victim of temptation? Because he is vain, are you, therefore, to be unjust? Were it not for you, the Shah had never known that I existed, and unmolested I should have continued in the enjoyment of my peace of mind. As it is, I am an outcast—at your instigation, first he has been led to think that I am a slave,

and, therefore, a lawful prize, and then when his determination was made up to possess me, you urged him on to invade the sanctity of the harem, and thus caused him to commit a sin against both God and man. Can you expect thanks from me after having created all this mischief and committed all this wickedness? From man, perhaps, you will gain nothing but applause—you have planned and have succeeded. The Shah is on your side—the world will say you have shewn ability, and no doubt you exult. But, sir, in so doing, you have ruined an honest man's happiness, and have degraded a virtuous woman. However, sir, the punishment which is your due, though not inflicted by the power of man, shall, *Inshallah*, be inflicted by the agency of weak woman. I am absolute here for three days, and thus do I make use of my privilege."

She then called to the attending eunuch, and ordered that the Kaka should be dragged forth and beaten on the soles of his feet, till she should cry enough.

"Go sir," she exclaimed, as he was about being seized, "go, receive a foretaste of future

punishment in that which you will receive now, and when you determine to ruin an honest woman again, think of your present victim, the unfortunate Fatmeh."

The utter astonishment of the Kaka may be better imagined than described. His face, at first, appeared undetermined whether to laugh at the whole scene as some premeditated hoax, or to take it in sober earnest. His features became longer and longer, as the offended woman encreased in energy, his eyes opened wide, his large ears vibrated, his under jaw dropped, and he stood in an attitude of one waiting to see a result.

When he was informed that the being before him was really absolute, and when he heard the sentence of punishment passed upon him, giving himself up for lost, he dropped on his knees, and having found a retreat in his lungs, to which he applied with an energy they never before possessed, he poured forth his fears in most piteous accents.

He opened wide his mouth, and upon receiving the first blow threw out a yell, so piercing, that it was said to have been

recognized by the Shah in a distant part of the palace whilst his Majesty was seated at supper.

He cried out *Amán! Amán!* in such a variety of tones, so wretched and at the same time so comical, that the attendant women, the eunuchs, and principally the operating executioners could not contain their laughter.

"To *Amán,*" he added, "I have eaten dirt," in accents equally mournful, and then he finished by the words, "forgive, forgive," calling to his aid, the King's salt, soul and beard, with every endearing appeal that he could bring to mind, until no longer being able to articulate, he was carried away to his own home, soundly beaten.

Fatmeh having performed this feat, then ordered every one to go from before her, proclaiming that she should remain entirely alone for the remaining two days, after which she would announce herself ready to see the King. She ordered the keys of every door to be brought, and took such singular precautions, making such a variety of strange arrangements, that the inmates of the palace were led to think that she might not be in her right mind.

When Fatmeh was left to herself, her first impulse was to throw herself upon her knees before Allah and say her prayers with fervour, imploring a blessing upon her undertaking. She then took off all the finery, the shawls, the cloth of gold and the jewellery with which she was decked, and having folded them into a heap, placed them conspicuously in the middle of the room, and deposited thereupon the magnificent ring which she had received from the Shah. She then clothed herself in her own garments, and covering herself from head to foot in a veil usually worn by women when they walk the streets, she waited for the hour when she might in safety venture to leave the palace.

She said to herself, "Ali," (that was the name of her brother) "will now be there, and should God listen to my prayer, in another hour I shall be under his protection."

She had previously so carefully enquired her way to the different exits of the palace, as well as to the outlets of the city, that she was at no loss how to proceed. When it was fully dark, and before the gates were closed, she boldly

advanced, and being taken for a slave by her attire, she walked on unmolested, until quite clear of the palace, when having found her way into the long and magnificent avenue of the Chahar Bagh, she knew that she could not miss the great cemetery, whither she had given rendez-vous to her brother. She walked on fearlessly, impelled by the consciousness of doing right, but when advancing upon the open ground at the termination of the avenue, she could not repress certain misgivings at finding herself so lonely and in so desolate a place, until perceiving the cemetery and its various tombs at hand, she again took courage, emboldened by the hope of soon meeting her brother. As she proceeded to thread the intricacies of the burying ground, she felt her fears return hearing the distant yells of the prowling jackall accompanied by the doleful sounds of the melancholy night bird. She imagined she saw figures gliding among the tombs, and all the terrors of death came before her mind. She had given the rendez-vous to her brother behind a given tomb, but there were so many, and all so like each other, that it was

with difficulty she could discover the very one she sought.

Her knees began to knock under her, her teeth chattered, and she was about taking refuge beneath a broken arch, when she heard the pleasing sound of a horse's neigh.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "there he is!" she then called him by name with all her might, when to her unspeakable joy, she immediately heard his voice responding her own, the sound of which issued from behind an adjacent tomb. She sprung thither and soon found herself in the embrace of her dearly beloved Ali.

They said little at first; "where are the horses?" said Fatmeh.

"Here they are," said Ali, "and their spirits are well up, I have taken care of that."

"Come let us go," said his sister, "I will tell you all bye and bye."

They mounted immediately, and were soon on the road to Shiraz. They rode a good pace upon first starting, in breathless silence, but as they proceeeded, they relaxed.

Ali was a young man about twenty-five years old, singularly active, clever and enterprising.

No difficulty ever arrested or perplexed him—he was ready at every call, observant and sagacious, and moreover of a kind and affectionate nature.

He knew his sister to be equally sagacious, and that she would not have sent for him but for very good reasons. His forethought had made him take every precaution to secure a safe and expeditious flight, and he had prepared a retreat for her at Shiraz, which would require something more than man's ingenuity to discover, should she be pursued. They continued their journey along the high road during the night, and in the morning struck into unfrequented paths, leaving the town of Yezdikhast on the left, and only touching at remote villages when they required refreshment.

It was during the journey that Fatmeh related to her brother the reasons which had determined her to leave her husband and send for him, she dwelt long upon the misery she had endured, and succeeded in exciting all his anger at the conduct of the Kaka, upon whom he was determined to be revenged, for the infamous

part he had acted. As for Abdallah, he knew that in the natural course of events, owing to his sister's spirited enterprise, he must come to the disgrace which was his due: he could not fail in some shape or other incurring the Shah's displeasure, but he vowed that if ever he met him, he should feel the weight of his anger. His principal aim was to place Fatmeh in safety, and to screen her from the search, which no doubt would immediately be instituted for her.

The second night after their departure from Ispahan, their horses being worn by excess of fatigue, they took refuge in a ruined caravanserai, where they intended to rest for some hours, feeling themselves secure, at present, from pursuit.

Ali helped his sister to dismount, and then sought for refreshment in certain saddle bags, which he had brought by way of precaution. He had been provident enough to conduct a third horse with him, in case either of the others should be knocked up, and glad was he to have done so, for his own exhibited strong symptoms of inability to proceed. He

turned them into the caravanserai, and having found some chopped straw which had been left there by former travellers, together with the corn which he had brought with him, he managed to give the poor animals a tolerable feed.

He and his sister seated on a horse cloth, were calmly discussing their sober repast, as well as the circumstances which had led to their present adventure, when suddenly they were startled by hearing what they thought to be a groan. They both looked serious, became silent, and lent a quick ear to the quarter whence the sound proceeded—again the groan was heard, it was that of a human being, and so deep that they concluded it to proceed from a man.

Ali immediately arose from his seat, and with his hand on his dagger, making a sign to his sister, at the same time, to remain still, he proceeded in the direction whence he heard the sound.

He bent his steps to the back part of the building where the arches were sound and

unbroken, but finding little light, he could not well distinguish what might be there secreted. He waited for a short time in order that his eyes might become accustomed to the darkness, and then looking well about him, perceived extended in a corner, what he conceived to be a dying man, who appeared motionless and occasionally emitted a deep groan. He then steped forward, and at the same time cried out, "who is there?"

The figure answering the question by a louder groan, Ali soon approached, and there, indeed, he found a man evidently much wounded, pale and weak from loss of blood, and in every way an object rather of compassion than of apprehension.

The first sound he uttered, was a cry for water, which Ali quickly brought, and which no sooner had he drank than he seemed much refreshed, so much so, that he became strong enough to articulate.

"Who are you and what has happened?" said Ali, anxious in his enquiry.

All the answer the sufferer could elicit was,

"I am dead—I am dead—they have killed me, the bankrupt dogs have killed me—may they grill in fires."

Again Ali enquired, "who are you?" but he received the same sort of answer, manifestly unwilling to make himself known.

Ali, then, assisted by his sister, who veiling herself, had followed his footsteps, brought him food, and demonstrated so much kindness, that the wariness of the stranger began to dissipate, and he appeared inclined to give some account of himself.

"What is the use of saying who and what I am," said he, "since here I must die, for I have no means of pursuing my journey and reaching my home. I am so wounded and bruised, that to walk is impossible, and were I to be found alone on these desert plains, I should only be subject to another assault."

"But, perhaps, we may be of use," said Fatmeh in her sweetest tone, "cannot we assist you?"

"The blessing of Allah be upon you," said the stranger, "how am I ever to shew my gratitude?

My home is distant, and who is there to go thither for me ?"

" We too," said Ali, " are on business of life and death, or in truth we would willingly go, but (a thought striking him at the same time) here is a horse at your service, jaded though he be—give him but time to recover his strength, and I'll promise you that he will carry you home, and to his services you are heartily welcome."

" Well done ! oh my brother," exclaimed Fatmeh, " truly you have done well, and thanks be to the prophet that we are able to help the stranger—yes, take the horse—have but a few hour's patience, and he will then be fit to carry you : as for us, we must proceed on our journey—we cannot delay—and so *Inshallah* we shall both be saved."

The wounded man looked up into the faces of the brother and sister, with the same degree of awe that he might have gazed upon angels.

" There is but one Allah !' said he in astonishment, " what do I hear ? do you come

from paradise that you should talk thus to a poor wretch like me—have my ears heard aright, or are you laughing at my beard?"

"Yes, yes," said they both in accents of encouragement, "we mean what we say, and so it shall be—take heart—look up—Allah sends succour to the unfortunate. It was a good hour when we came hither, and whenever it pleases Him to conduct you home, then say *barikallah!* oh well done Ali—the sword-cutler of Shiraz."

"Since thus you speak," said the stranger, "why should this less than the least lie, and not own the truth? Give ear—when you hear who I am; start not, but lay my words to heart and may destiny turn them to a fortunate account. Give ear—I am one whom men fear, and should I ever be caught, they will come from afar to see me. I am the man they call Iskender Memacenni—have you heard and do you understand?"

"I both hear and understand," said Ali, "you need say no more—we are told to help the afflicted, and to be hospitable to the stranger—what can we do more?"

Iskender was a famous chief of the Memacenni, an ancient tribe of mountaineers, celebrated as the most expert and powerful thieves and marauders ever known in Persia. They inhabited the country about the Caleh Sefid or the White Castle, and kept so close to their fastnesses in the mountains, where they are independent of all government, that the Shah and his governors looking upon their destruction as hopeless, thought it best to compromise matters, and for a certain annual tribute, allowed them to remain unmolested, although they were the terror of caravans and travellers.

Gaining strength with the food he had eaten, and animated with the exciting hope of being able to reach his home, Iskender gradually raised himself from the ground, and exhibited to the eyes of Ali and Fatmeh, the form of a strong and powerful man, his features stern and ferocious, though when relaxed, expressing much feeling, and bearing in his whole deportment, the manners of one accustomed to command. He said,

" My story is this—I left the castle yester-

day with a band of twenty men, having heard that a large caravan would pass in the morning at day-break. But evidently we were purposely deceived—for when we lay in ambush in the mountain pass, instead of a caravan, we perceived a strong body of the governor of Shiraz's cavalry approaching, and then we knew that we were betrayed. I gave the signal to disperse, but not before the attack. We made the best defence we could surrounded on every side—we fought, and I should have been taken, had not my horse been swifter than those of my assailants—I escaped from the principal body, but two *gholams*, who rode horses almost equal to mine, chose to give chase and followed me far into this plain, when my steed fell and I was obliged to fight on foot: they beat me almost to death and left me in the state you see, taking my fine horse as their prize. They left me for dead on the field, but reviving after some time, I was enabled with the aid and mercy of Allah to crawl hither, and here I probably should have died, had you not come to my relief."

Ali little expected that the man whom they had thus relieved, should prove so objectionable and formidable a character. Having once made a present of his horse, he could not withdraw it, but still urged the robber chief to take advantage of it, although at the same time, he became extremely impatient to shorten his acquaintance with such a personage. Iskender, seeing them on the point of departure, and feeling that through their generosity, he was enabled to leave a spot which otherwise would probably have been his tomb, gave utterance to his gratitude in the following words.

" May Allah take you into his holy keeping —may you never know misfortune—may plenty always abound in your house! Allah grant that some opportunity may occur which will allow Iskender to exhibit his gratitude, to shew that he is a man—that he can requite a benefit—that he is more then sensible to such goodness as you have shewn him! You have saved his life, when you might have allowed him to die. You continue your benefits to him although you know that he is unworthy of them—you treat him as a friend, when all else treat him

as an enemy! Where can he find words to speak of so much goodness? This learn—this keep at the bottom of your heart, that should misfortune ever overtake you, should you ever want an asylum from oppression, fly to him, seek him among his brave tribe and his gallant followers, they will receive you with open arms, they will carry you on the tops of their heads, the dust of your feet will be ointment for their eyes, they will protect you in their mountains, in their deep caverns they will preserve you from harm, they will live for you, and they will also die for you."

This he uttered with such warmth, and such appearance of sincerity, that both Ali and his sister were sensibly affected, and promised faithfully never to lose the recollection of his promises, for they both in their inmost hearts could not help feeling, that the day might come, when in reality, they would stand in need of such a friend. They took an affectionate leave of him, and forgetting the robber, in consideration of the high qualities, which evidently characterised the

man, they sincerely wished him happiness, and again bent their steps toward Shiraz.

Ali and Fatmeh managed to enter the gates of the city, together with the crowd of peasants who usually collect there at the earliest dawn, previous to the entrance being free. He sought his home as speedily as possible, and stealthily deposited his charge therein, before the neighbours were astir. Indeed, Fatmeh reached her place of refuge unknown, and unnoticed, and here we must leave her for the present, to see what was doing at the royal palace at Ispahan subsequent to her departure.

When Shah Abbas, at supper, was informed, that the Kaka was receiving the bastinado, by the command of the Lady Fatmeh, the asylum of the universe laughed till tears came from his eyes. He had never before enjoyed so comfortable a joke. Ah! said his Majesty to himself, this will teach the rascal not to call a lawful wife, a slave again—she has evidently heard the scandal, and is paying him for his insolence. As soon as the beaten man was able to hobble, he hastened to lay his com-

plaint before the Shah. The figure he made, was in every way woeful, and at the same time comical to behold. His naturally crooked legs were become doubly so, in consequence of his limping gait, whilst his face betrayed pain of body and mortification of mind.

"As I am your sacrifice," he said, bowing himself down before the monarch, "let the King of Kings cast his eyes upon his slave, and observe the situation to which he is reduced. May his liver become dry, may his eyes look within instead of without, may he never again rub his unworthy forehead against the royal threshold, if (saving your imperial presence), that blessed houri, that loveliest of the lovely, that rose without compare, has not, in all mercy and tender heartedness, beat the feet of your unworthy slave into a jelly. See, he cannot walk without limping like a stricken hind. He has in vain desired to make a report of her charms and perfections, but has hitherto been prevented by the new mode she has adopted of expressing her satisfaction at your slave's conduct. And, wherefore, O centre of the world, is all this? because he has been

the cause of separating her from that king of mules her husband, to unite her to that King of Kings, our blessed Sovereign, to whom be long life and a happy reign. Is this a reason, why your slave should be beaten and be prevented from paying his court to his royal master?"

"You have said enough," said the King—"the Lady Fatmeh has only done what I intended to do. Is it not just and lawful that she should be offended at the insult you offered, calling her a slave, when she is a free woman; wherefore will you always lie, O little man! Why will that throat of yours be like an open tomb, full of rottenness and abomination—the Lady did right—say no more—thank Allah it is no worse, and bless your good destiny that the Shah still calls you Kaka."

The unfortunate jester seeing how matters stood, was wise enough to hold his peace, and without more words allowed his wounded feet to get well, whilst he smothered his still more wounded feelings. The Shah, in the mean while, adhered most faithfully to his fair in-

mate's desire of perfect quiet and solitude, for three days before he visited her, although his patience, during the process, was undergoing a severe trial. In order to beguile the time, he undertook a hunting excursion, and strange to say, pursued the direction in which the fugitives were directing their course, but luckily they had obtained the start of a whole night, and were nearly installed in Shiraz before the expiration of the third day.

On the morning of the fourth, the Shah sent for the head of the harem, the eunuch in chief, and ordered him to proceed with all due respect to the apartments of the Lady Fatmeh to say that he would pay her a visit immediately after the great public audience, and that every thing should be prepared to receive him in the most magnificent manner. Accordingly that dignitary proceeded to the gate of the apartment, which finding locked, he invaded with all the authority of one bearing a commission from the King. He knocked and knocked again, but no response being made, he proceeded to batter down the door, which being done, he entered, but full

of wonder, he found no inhabitant, nor any appearance of one. He walked from room to room, nothing was seen, until he came to the great hall, and there, in the midst, he found the heap which Fatmeh had made of her finery, surmounted by the valuable ring.

Surprise and astonishment seized the eunuch and his attendants. How is this, said one! Ajaib! Wonderful, said another. The Kaka will pay for this, said a third. She is gone as sure as destiny, was repeated from mouth to mouth, as soon as the wonderful intelligence was known throughout the palace—then all was hurry—every hole and corner were ransacked—messengers ran to and fro, porters were interrogated, the city guards questioned, every thing was done which might throw a light upon this strange elopement; but nothing was elicited.

As the time drew near when the Shah was to make his visit, his impatience now being excited to the utmost, it became necessary to devise some mode of informing him of the real state of the case. Who would undeceive him? that was the question, for the first burst of a despots anger is always a most dangerous

crisis. The eunuch in chief was the official channel through which the information ought to be carried, but he already was almost dead with fear. The grand vizier was resorted to in the emergency, but he avowed that he never interfered, and, indeed, it was indelicate and improper that he should meddle in affairs of the harem, therefore, he declined—at length all were unanimous that the Kaka should be the man—he was pitched upon to be the informer—but he had suffered enough for once, and he shrunk from the task as he would from certain decapitation. But upon second consideration, seeing that the truth could not be concealed, that it must be told and that within a very short space of time, and that ultimately he must encounter a considerable share of the Shah's displeasure, he deemed it the wisest plan on all accounts, for himself, as well as for every one else, to proceed boldly and inform the King.

Shah Abbas on that morning had dressed himself with more than usual splendour. He placed a resplendent cap on his head, ornamented with the royal jika, he wore rich

armlets, dazzling by the magnificence of the diamonds, his vest was of cloth of gold, his dagger glittered with jewels, and his whole appearance, having freshly dyed his beard, bespoke a desire to please and astonish.

On rising from his throne, at the breaking up of the usual noon-day Selam, he was proceeding straight to his favourite's apartments, when he was met in the long court leading thereto by the Kaka, who having put on a face for the occasion, was seen advancing with unusual trepidation, in a manner which luckily excited the royal smile, and when close to the royal person, was observed to fall prone on his face, and there lay to the astonishment of the King, and those around him.

"What has happened, O little man!" exclaimed the Shah. "Are we mad this morning, or have our courtiers become like asses in the field. Speak, what is it?"

"Your slave is dumb with terror," said the Kaka, "prodigies have come to pass—the world is gone back—we are become dogs and swine!"

"Speak—wherefore do you stay my progress,"

said the Shah, and again was proceeding on his expedition of expected enjoyment.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" exclaimed the Kaka, "the nightingale is seeking the rose, but the rose will not receive the nightingale. She is gone. The charmer is fled. Satan has gotten possession of her, and we are left in doubt and suspense. The world is walking round and round its own finger."

"What words are these!" said the Shah, his countenance undergoing a rapid change of expression. "Speak plain. Who is fled?"

Then all the surrounding attendants who were aware of the flight of Fatmeh, fell upon their faces and exclaimed "the Lady Fatmeh is gone!"

The King stood like one struck by some fatal disorder. He trembled, his face became scarlet, then pale—his eyes shot fire, his forehead worked to and fro, his teeth were set, and after exhibiting every effect of mortified pride and baffled expectation, he broke out into uncontrollable anger. He first apostrophized the wretched jester. "Dog, and dirt of the earth—filth—vile scum! 'tis to you that

I owe this. In degrading the woman—you have debased your master. Here take him, throw him upon the first dunghill— go, light the oven with his vile carcase—let every dog defile his grave—let every tent-pitcher spit in his face—and where is the herd of unclean eunuchs? conduct them all hither. A woman fled from my harem and they ignorant of it! How is this? Kill them all—make more—am I a King, or am I not? We will see! We will see!" He said this, as he turned on his heel, and returned to his own apartment, his body vibrating with rage, and his hand clutching his dagger, as if he would have slain every living soul around.

In the meanwhile, the Kaka was hustled away by those who were too happy, to divert the violence of the storm from their heads to his. He was beaten, pommelled, kicked, spit upon and reviled. But as there was no really definite order to put him to death, excepting the one of heating an oven with his carcase, and as there was no oven at hand, he was left to bear his misery until one should be found, or until the royal displeasure, should be

more fully developed. Then there arose a general chase after the eunuchs, pursuant to the royal commands. They were hunted down wherever they could be found, seized and placed in durance vile, until the King's wishes should be better known. Never before had such a commotion been seen in the imperial household. Men held their heads between their two hands, fearful lest, at the next moment, they should be deprived of them. Every sole of the foot and every toe in the palace tingled with apprehension, lest they should soon be administered unto with sticks. Not a man felt comfortable. Of those who were in a state of enjoyment, the women stood alone. A hated rival had been lost to them, and they indulged the hope that now their dominion was secure, unassailed by what they esteemed a base and unlawful intrusion.

When the first explosion of the Shah's rage had in some degree abated, he ordered the Kaka to be brought before him. An officer was also sent to conduct Abdallah and his father Mirza Bauker to his presence. These two worthies when they received intimation of

Fatmeh's flight became alarmed, lest the Shah's displeasure should fall heavily upon them, and when visited by the summons to appear, their fears knew no bounds. They followed the officer in trepidation, though not without some secret hope cherished by Abdallah, that he himself was too much of a favourite at court to apprehend molestation.

When they appeared before the King, that is, the Kaka, Abdallah and Mirza Bauker, without allowing them to say a word in explanation or in self-defence, his Majesty thus addressed them: "Dogs! burnt fathers! be this known unto you, that the Shah expects the Lady Fatmeh at your hands to be restored to him. Go, bring her, and should you return without her, come each with a rope around your necks, for there will then be no hope left for you. Depart — you have all the help the King's power can give you, employ it for the good of his service, and for the salvation of your own lives. Go, the Shah has said it."

The three unhappy men, secretly surprized at this result, for in truth, they had given themselves up for lost, left the King's presence

to consult what was to be done. Finding that Fatmeh was acquainted with no one at Ispahan, therefore not likely to be secreted in the city, and hearing that she had a brother at Shiraz, the Kaka immediately opined, that to that place they ought on the outset to bend their steps, and should they not find her there, then to proceed onwards to Basora. They lost no time in collecting a sufficient escort and making their preparations for a long journey; when all was ready, provided with royal firmans and protecting officers, they departed and took the high road to Shiraz.

We must now return to Ali and Fatmeh, who having reached their abode, did not delay taking precautions to protect themselves against the consequences of their flight. They agreed that the Shah would immediately send the Kaka in pursuit, that he, learning from Abdallah that she had a brother at Shiraz, would first bend his steps thither, and that, therefore, they ought to lay their plans to meet that emergency. Fatmeh thought it most expedient, at once, to proceed in all haste to Basora, and there seek refuge with her parents; Ali, on the

contrary, was of opinion that considering the length and difficulty of the road, and the uncertainty of meeting with a vessel bound to Basora without incurring the risk of a moment's delay, there was every chance of their being overtaken. He, therefore, was strongly of opinion that they ought to remain stationary to meet the Kaka's arrival by stratagem, and defeat by their wits that which they could not resist by force. He was endowed with considerable talents of mimickry and invention, he could personate whoever he chose, and act to the life any character which had come within his observation. The plan he proposed to Fatmeh was this, that she should retire to some village for the present, that the house should be closed, and that he should announce to his neighbours and friends, that he was going to Basora. In the meanwhile, he proposed to himself to take possession of a certain hut, usually the habitation of a dervish, but now unoccupied, which was situated close to the narrow pass, called Teng Allahacbar, through which every traveller coming from Ispahan must necessarily pass, and there he would wait the arrival of the Kaka.

It would then be left to his own ingenuity so to cajole and play upon the feelings of this personage, that he might be induced to leave Shiraz unsearched, and proceed on his road towards Basora. Fatmeh ceding to the better judgment of her brother, acquiesced in his proposal, and straightway attaching herself to a company of women, about to visit a distant *Ziaretgah*, or place of pilgrimage, she left her brother to his own inventions. He forthwith procured from different hands, in order to screen himself from detection, the various articles which compose a dervish's dress—from one he borrowed the tiara, of another he purchased a deer-skin; he bought the spoon and beads in an old lumber shop, and thus when he had gathered himself together, announcing that he was about setting off for Basora and making a shew of departure, he left the city at daybreak, and took himself to the dervish's hut at the Teng Allahacbar.

There he dressed himself in his new attire, secreted his clothes in a neighbouring watercourse, and having spread out his handkerchief on the border of the road, to receive the alms

of travellers and passers by, he boldly took upon himself all the airs of the character he had adopted He loudly blew his horn, made his appeals in the most approved manner to the sacred name of Allah, and threw into his whole appearance, that wildness, fanaticism and indifference to worldly matters, so common to the brotherhood of wandering dervishes, that no acting was ever more perfect. He posted himself at the door of his hut from whence he could command both roads, and remark those who were travelling from Ispahan towards Shiraz, as well as those who were taking the opposite direction. During the first day of his probation, he was delighted to find his disguise effective, for many with whom he was intimate, having conversed with him without betraying the least sign of recognition, he flattered himself that he was quite safe from discovery. On the second day, he began to look out for the Kaka, and turned over in his mind how he might persuade him to proceed at once to the sea coast, without visiting Shiraz; when having composed in his own mind, a

story plausible in every circumstance, as well as prepared himself for every emergency, he felt more easy, and quite ready to act his part.

He feared that should this personage appear at nightfall, his scheme would be defeated for then he would not fail taking up his quarters in the city, but if by good luck he arrived either in the morning or at noon, then he might most likely persuade him to travel onwards. In either case, he framed expedients ready for use, and after every train of thought, he composed his spirits by a hearty exclamation of *Allah kerim*, God is merciful!

He began to look about him very sharply on the evening of the second day, but no Kaka appearing, he laid himself down on his deer-skin and slept; very early the next morning, however, ere the day had dawned, he thought he heard the distant footsteps of a large cavalcade. He arose in haste and looking towards the Ispahan road, he, indeed, perceived many horsemen coming towards him. The day was clearing fast, and as they passed under the archway, situated at the summit of the pass, he was certain that in the foremost horseman,

he perceived the ill-shapen person of the Kaka. His heart throbbed when he found that his moment for trial was come. The Kaka was known to all the world and not to be mistaken. He, Ali, was unknown to the Kaka, and so far safe. He was very slightly acquainted with Abdallah, who had only seen him once when a boy at Basora, and he never had any dealings with Mirza Bauker, therefore, on the whole, he hoped to pass unrecognized.

When they approached, Ali began to wind his dervish's horn and to utter loud cries, of Hoo! Allah Acbar! May Allah prosper your journey! and such like exclamations, seating himself on the ground at the same time near to his outspread handkerchief.

"Peace be with you, Sir dervish," said the Kaka as he rode up.

"May peace attend you," said Ali looking totally unconcerned, and almost contemptuously at the company, after the manner of dervishes.

"What news is there," said the Kaka.

"*Dúniah pootch est,* the world is a

vapour, that is the news," said the pretended dervish still more contemptuously.

The Kaka, Abdallah and Mirza Bauker with the royal eunuch, who was one of the company, then consulting together in an under tone, Ali at a glance perceived who they were, and prepared himself accordingly.

"Have any women passed this way lately," said the Kaka.

"Women!" said Ali, "what do I know of women! they pass and repass, what more can I say!"

"We enquire about one woman in particular," said Abdallah, "travelling alone from Ispahan, have you seen any such?"

"And wherefore not?" said Ali, "if I have seen such a woman, what then?"

These words produced great and general excitement among the assembled party. "For the sake of Allah," said the Kaka, "tell us all that you know concerning her. In the name of the Shah, whose servant I am, I request of you to speak and tell no lies."

Ali observing their state of anxiety, became proportionately indifferent. What care I or what can I say? She was a weak one, a little

woman. She was without strength. She said she had come from afar—what more can I say?"

"That's her we seek," said Abdallah, "did she say whence she came?"

"Perhaps she did, perhaps she did not," answered Ali, "I think she said she came from Ispahan, but she might have come from Paradise for what I know. What has a dervish to do with womankind?"

"O little man!" exclaimed the Kaka in a voice, which denoted impatience and irritation. "Do you see these men? They will tear you to pieces bit by bit, if you do not speak. They are the Shah's gholams, I am the King's servant, and should you not inform us of all you know concerning this woman, by Allah, by all that is sacred, we will cut your tongue out.

"If you cut my tongue out, you will be making bad worse," said Ali, with provoking obstinacy, "what can the poor dervish say, when his tongue is out?"

"We know what sort of swine dervishes are," said the Kaka still more irate, "when they lie, they lie for gain—when they are silent, they are silent for gain also. Speak!"

"What more did the woman say," enquired Abdallah, "and whither did she go?"

"The little woman was ill and tired," said Ali, "and could not proceed. She was going to die."

"Where is she then," enquired the Kaka, "is she here?"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Ali, "what should I do with a sick woman?"

"By the Imams, by the beard of the Prophet, by the King's salt, I'll have you soundly beaten, if you do not speak out. Here," calling to one of his attendants, "here take this rascal, and beat him on the mouth, make his soul jump out of the first hole in his body. We will see, who will speak and who will not."

Accordingly there was a stir among the escort, and some stout fellows dismounted, preparatory to putting the Kaka's orders into execution, when Ali, having, as he thought, pushed matters far enough and appearing to take fright, exclaimed, "Trust in God! I will say what I know, and what more can your slave do. He cannot invent a woman to your

liking and wishes—he can only say what he saw and heard."

"Speak on then," exclaimed the Kaka, perfectly livid with rage. "Why do you keep us waiting? This is the Shah's service, man! do you hear. The Shah! the Shah!"

"As I am your sacrifice," said Ali, taking up a tone of great humility, "my narrative is as follows. Your slave was seated here, saying his evening prayers, some three, four, five days since, when he heard a woman's voice at the door of his tent, exclaiming for the love of Allah, give me help or I die. I arose and saw a female on an ass, accompanied by a son of Islam, an old man, who might have been a peasant, or a robber, or, perhaps, one of those who live near the White Castle. I gave her water, and she was refreshed, but she said, 'I cannot go on. I must alight and repose, or you will have to answer for my death at your door.' There was nothing to be done, but to accede to her wishes. She came into the hut and lay down on my deer-skin. There she lay till the morning, her companion in the meanwhile, took himself off into the

desert and I saw him no more. She slept profoundly, and when the morning came, to my utter surprize, her veil having partially dropt off, I discovered that she was a houri of Paradise, and not a woman, for I verily believe that flesh and blood never before were combined into beauty and loveliness so superhuman—I gazed—I was beside myself. But when she awoke, her first impulse was to cover her face, like the strictest of the daughters of the true faith, and then she raised her voice to thank me for my hospitality. What can I say? I had become interested in the unfortunate one—I would have died for her. I said, speak to your servant and tell me what to do, for happen what may, the poor dervish will serve you to the utmost of his power. She said then in accents the most fascinating, 'Go to one Ali, a sword cutler in Shiraz; tell him, his sister Fatmeh awaits him, and let him bring two horses with him, that we may go hence, for she will be pursued and taken, if he does not haste.'

"There was nothing to be said, I did so, I found Ali, he came with the utmost zeal to

his sister's help. He brought refreshments, he brought things, and he brought two horses. I learnt that she was flying from disgrace, that there was one Abdallah, whom she called husband, a pitiful sneaking wretch, who infatuated by a little court attention, had abandoned her to the persecutions of the Shah himself; that he was seconded by an ass of the first dimensions, one Mirza Bauker his father, who equally eat dirt by the maund, and that her principal enemy was a miscreant, one called Kaka Pembeh, a vile pander to the Shah's iniquities, a jackall, who goes about seeking for innocence and destroying it;—a crooked backed, crooked minded, evil intentioned—"

"Well, well," exclaimed the Kaka, "you have said enough; none of your truths by mistake, if you please," he added in a whisper to himself.

"*Ajaib*, wonderful!" exclaimed Abdallah.

"*Ajaib*," said Mirza Bauker, "he knows us both!"

"But whither did they go," said the Kaka, regaining possession of the true question.

"They set off straight for the *bender*, the port, in order to take ship and thus proceed

to Basora, where she has parents and friends. What more can I say?"

"Which road did they take," enquired one of the party.

"As I am your slave," said the pretended dervish, "I cannot answer for certain, but I think they said they would go through the Memacenni country, in order to avoid detection."

Upon this there arose much discussion among the assembled party, and, at length, it was determined, that they should not halt at Shiraz, but push on at once for Abusheher. It was also determined that Abdallah and Mirza Bauker, in order to lose no chance of success, should take the Memacenni road, and thus gaining information, trace the fugitives to the very spot of embarcation.

"But," said the wary Kaka, "are we very certain that all is the truth, which we have heard from this dervish, whoever he may be?"

"Take me with you," said Ali, "and thus you may ascertain whether he lie or not. You have me in your own hands."

"He does not speak amiss," said the Kaka,

when ordering one of the led horses to be prepared for the supposed dervish, Ali was mounted thereupon, and proceeded with the cavalcade.

They travelled straightway towards the coast, leaving Shiraz on the left hand. Ali felt delighted at the success of his imposture, and he forthwith set his invention to work, how he might best prevent the jester and his whole party from ever returning to Shiraz again. He first hoped, that good luck might throw them into the hands of the Memacenni, and thus he settled their fate in a consolatory manner to his own conscience, saying, "if they are to lose their lives, and eat a bitter destiny, O let it be soon and effectual." But seeing how well they were armed, and aware of the effect produced by the passage of a King's officer with a royal guard through the country, he felt that so sweet a hope would fail him; therefore, his last resource for practising further deceit, he foresaw would be at the place of embarcation itself, where he possessed friends who might assist him. He, therefore, devoted himself in right

earnest to acquire influence over the Kaka, a power which he possessed in a supreme degree; and most effectually did he succeed, for that worthy, in the course of a day or two, became so charmed with him and his humour, that he would only see with his eyes, hear with his ears, and reason through his understanding.

Ali owing to the sagacity of his conduct and the multiplicity of his wiles, led his companions to believe that they really had got scent of the fugitives. At one time he pretended to hear from a peasant on a distant hill, that two such people had been seen, then, that three days before they had been remarked winding their way down the steep declivity of one of the great mountain passes, and thus by plausible deceit producing conviction. On the day before reaching the city of Abusheher, Ali persuaded the Kaka to allow him to proceed in advance, in order to stay the departure of any vessel, that might be about to sail for Basora and the Euphrates. He reached the port just time enough to prevent the sailing of a bark, which happened to be owned and commanded by a near relation of

his own, to whom he did not delay relating the dangerous situation in which he and his sister were placed, and requesting him as he loved Allah and adored his prophet, to aid him in the scheme which he had carried on to save her, and which up to this moment had so well succeeded. His relation entered completely into his views; for who that had ever heard of Fatmeh, could refrain being interested in her fate, and he promised to act entirely as Ali might direct.

"Tell the Kaka," said Ali, "as soon as he appears, that the fugitives only departed yesterday morning for Basora, and that if we hasten all we can, by setting sail instantly, we may overtake them even before they reach their destination."

Thus much being agreed upon between them, Ali returned to the Kaka, and having met him ere he entered the town of Abusheher, informed him of the success which had attended his proceedings, that he had gained intelligence of the fugitives, and moreover that a vessel was in readiness to take him off immediately.

This intelligence gave joy and delight to the

whole party; but when Ali turned his eyes towards the Kaka's attendants, he discovered that the royal eunuch who had accompanied him, as well as several of the gholams, were not among the number.

"Where is my lord eunuch?" said Ali, "his place is empty."

"I have sent him back to Shiraz," said the Kaka, with a cunning smile, "we have agreed, that we were like the fool who left the door of the stable open, thus leaving no guard at Shiraz—so brother Ali, I have sent him back to wait my return. Have I done well or not?"

The woe stricken Ali, could scarcely command his countenance at this intelligence. He felt all the danger into which his sister would be thrown. He would have given his ears to be at Shiraz. He managed just to stammer out, "You have done well;" and then urging on the whole party towards the place of embarcation, he again proceeded in advance himself, scarcely conscious of what he was about. However, his readiness of mind and action did not forsake him. He just allowed himself time to conduct the Kaka to the vessel, and introduce

him to the captain, when under pretext of going into the bazaar to buy some necessary provisions, he immediately took himself to a friend's house, upon whom he could depend, and straightway doffing his dervish's dress, he equipped himself as one upon his travels, wearing the usual costume and armed in the ordinary mode of travellers. Then mounting a horse which he borrowed for the occasion, he left his companions to their own inventions, and straightway took the Shiraz road, in the hope of being able to reach that place before the eunuch and his party could have had time to get there.

He travelled with all haste, and being acquainted with every step of the country, and every pass in the mountains, he succeeded to his heart's content. Seeing the eunuch and his men toiling up one of the steep ascents, Ali chose one still steeper, and thus unseen, he managed to precede them, and to gain access to his own house in the city, two days before they reached their destination. His arrival gave Fatmeh, who had returned from her pilgrimage, the greatest delight, but when she heard the

cause of his sudden reappearance, she became as much the prey of apprehension as he could be.

"What shall we do? where shall we go?" she said in accents of despair. "Should this eunuch with an evil soul discover me, I am lost, I shall be straightway delivered over to the Shah, and my doom will forthwith be sealed."

"Have you forgotten Iskender, the Memacenni?" said Ali, "now is the time to try his words and his fidelity. My soul, Fatmeh, let us bend our steps towards his haunts, there we may secrete ourselves until we hear of the Kaka's return from his fruitless expedition, when we may proceed in all safety to Basora, there to take refuge with your parents."

"Wonderful wit have you!" cried Fatmeh in exultation. "You have not spoken ill. Come let us go without a moment's delay. Should this son of Satan arrive, he will discover and seize upon me without compunction. Let us be gone."

They soon made the necessary preparations for departure and waiting for the close of day to issue from the city, they directed their steps

towards the country of the Memacenni. Mounted upon good horses, they travelled all night, and ere the morning dawned, were so far removed from Shiraz, that they proceeded without apprehension. When they had reached the neighbourhood of the Caleh Sefid, preserving all proper caution in their enquiries, they found their way to the abode of the renowned robber-chief. In a deep recess of one of the most dreary and stony branches of the mountain range, they discovered a village, walled and turreted, and this they were informed was the usual residence of Iskender and his immediate followers, the tribe itself, being dispersed in villages and tents throughout the surrounding region.

Ali and his sister at once directed their steps thither, and when they entered the gate enquired for the chief. His house was scarcely to be distinguished from others of the village. It was a low flat roofed tenement, built of sunburnt bricks covered with reeds and plastered over with mud and chopped straw. Its only mark of distinction were two good horses, ready caparisoned, tethered before

the door. It was towards the close of day when they arrived. Ali dismounting first, enquired of a rough and unwashed menial, where was Iskender Beg, and was answered, "he is eating his evening's meal," and, moreover, was invited to enter by that universal invitation among Mahomedans—*bismillah.*

Leaving Fatmeh at the door, he entered a room where he perceived a company of men plunging their hands into a large dish of rice, and too much taken up with what they were about to heed his appearance.

Iskender himself occupied the post of honour, and perceiving a stranger, the room being dark, he forthwith invited him to sit and eat. Ali aware of the proper decorums, did as he was bid, determined to await the end of the meal before he made himself known. At length when all was over and the men arose to wash their hands, Iskender gave himself time to look at his new guest.

"By my soul," said he, "you are somebody. Whence come you? You are welcome, whoever you may be."

"Is your memory so short," said Ali,

" that you do not recollect the sword cutler of Shiraz."

" O my ill-fortune," exclaimed Iskender starting from his seat, and rising on his feet, " is it thus my memory serves me! Praise be to Allah, praise be to Allah, that you are come, that your steps have found your way to my unworthy threshold. Welcome, O welcome!"

Upon which he threw his arms about his neck and embraced him, exhibiting so many symptoms of joy, that no one could doubt of his sincerity.

" See, see," said he to those around, " this is that Ali of Shiraz, of whom I have so often spoken; he saved my life—he gave me a horse —and where is that angel of Paradise, your sister," he exclaimed turning again towards Ali, " where have you left her, what can I do for your service?"

Ali then informed him that his sister was waiting without, and in two words stated the necessity of the step they had taken, of flying to him for a temporary retreat from persecution.

Iskender immediately rushed out and having sought Fatmeh, made unbounded protestations of his devotion, ordered her to be conducted to the abode of his own women, with directions that every care should be taken of her.

During the short interval which intervened between Ali going into the house to make himself known to Iskender and his return to Fatmeh, an event occurred, which as it afterwards turned out, proved decisive of her future fate. Tired of sitting her horse, Fatmeh had just dismounted, and seeing no one present, she disengaged her veil from her face, in order to enjoy the pleasure of inhaling the fresh air. Suddenly, as if by magic, appeared before her, her husband, followed by his father —Abdallah in person stood in her presence face to face. So great was her surprize, that both father and son had full time to gaze upon her ere she could lower her veil. And when Ali followed by Iskender returned to her, they found her in so great a tremor and so full of alarm, that she could scarcely breathe.

"What has happened?" said Ali, as soon as he witnessed his sister's emotion.

"What has happened?" echoed Iskender, "has any burnt father here spoken the language of insult?"

Fatmeh only answered by pointing her hand in the direction of the path which Abdallah and Mirza Bauker were taking, their persons being still visible at a distance.

"What of those men?" said Ali.

"What of those men?" said Iskender.

"By your soul," said Fatmeh to her brother, "that is Abdallah Aga and his father, I saw them with these eyes—I shall die—oh Allah what shall we do?"

"Who are those men," said Ali turning towards Iskender.

"There?" enquired the robber chief pointing his hand, "those are two dogs without saints, whom we caught the other day travelling the road, and by your soul they made me think of you and your sister for they asked me whether we had seen a man and a maiden proceeding this way. I spoke but few words, but those few were to order them here,

and here they are—but fewer words still shall they speak again."

Then making a horizontal sign, with his arm, he said:

"We will cut—we will kill—here Taki," he cried out to one of his ruffians, "here, run to those ill-fated dogs, strike and bring their heads here to be placed at the disposal of our guests."

"For Allah's sake," exclaimed Fatmeh, exhibiting still greater despair then before, "for Allah's sake stay your hand."

"My friend," said Ali, "let us spill no blood, but as you love your children, as your own beard is dear to you, make us free of those men—send them away at once—give them their beasts and their goods, and say to them, a prosperous journey, and may Allah take you under his care, and allow them to depart."

"Upon my eyes be it," said Iskender, "say to me kill, and I kill—say put out eyes, and I put out eyes—say beat and I beat—say also be generous and I am generous—I will send the burnt fathers away this very moment."

Upon which he immediately ordered Abdal-

lah and Mirza Bauker to be provided with provisions, their beasts restored and that they should be released from the confinement in the village to which he had condemned them.

They immediately departed, but who can express the joy with which their hearts were filled. Having been taken prisoner by Iskender, they were almost frightened to death when they found that they had fallen into the hands of the Memacenni. Robbed of all they possessed, they were kept in confinement within the walls of the fortified village, and there in despair and dismay they passed their time in hourly fear of being put to death, when sauntering about the street, to their utter surprise, they beheld before them the face of the lost Fatmeh. Alarmed at hearing the voices of men, voices proceeding from Ali and Iskender as they came to seek her, and bewildered by the suddenness of the apparition, they were walking away to give vent to their emotion, when they were overtaken by this sudden order to depart.

"As your soul is your own, and as this beard is mine," said Mirza Bauker seizing his chin, "that was Fatmeh whom we saw."

"What words are these?" said Abdallah. "I know that as well as you, I saw her with these eyes—but how gat she here? are the jins at work or are we anything more than flesh and blood?"

Ere they departed, they had time to enquire whether there had been any arrival at the village, and when it was ascertained that a man and a woman had arrived, such as they were seeking, they then became convinced that that man and that woman, could be no other than Ali and his sister.

Being quit of the village, they determined with great unanimity immediately to bend their steps to Ispahan, and disclose to the Shah the discovery which they had achieved.

"If we do not become something after this," said Abdallah, "I am not a man! see what has been our good destiny. We separate from the Kaka—we are seized, and robbed—we expect to lose our lives, when suddenly we

discover that which we were seeking and are sent away safe and sound. If that is not luck I not know what is !"

" Yes, yes," exclaimed old Mirza Bauker, " and moreover we shall burn the Kaka's father to boot. The Shah will say *Aferin* to us—well done, well done—but as for the Kaka, he will make his soul jump out of his body."

" Wonderful ! wonderful !" exclaimed Abdallah, and rode on rejoicing. " We shall have a *Kalaat*, we shall have white faces—we shall have things—oh our luck ! our luck ! what will men say !"

They reached Ispahan as fast as their steeds could carry them, and as soon as they entered the city, made straight for the royal palace. They insisted upon being immediately taken before the Shah, and were straightway conducted into the secret apartment where he was seated. As soon as they reached the presence, they fell on their faces, and there remained, until the King exclaimed :

" Dog's sons arise and speak."

" As we are your sacrifice," said Abdallah, " your slaves have been and seen—we have found the weak one."

"Are you eating dirt," said the Shah, "or do you speak the truth!" his face becoming animated with satisfaction.

"Yes, by the soul of the King," said Abdallah, "the King's good fortune has attended us, and his slaves are come to lay their humble representation at the foot of the throne."

"Where—where? speak!" said the Shah.

"The weak one is with the Memacenni—your slaves saw her there with their own eyes."

"So, is it!" said the Shah in cogitation, "where is Kaka Pembeh?"

Abdallah then explained the whole of their proceedings, shewing the reasons why they had separated from him, and describing minutely how they had suddenly and unexpectedly gained a sight of his wife.

As Abdallah had anticipated, (not by the power of his own wisdom, but by the force of circumstances) he was made much of at court, as soon the success of his mission was announced; for the Shah had been in so great a state of ill-humoured excitement since he had lost, both his mistress and his jester, that it

became dangerous for any one to approach him.

The grand vizier had longed for the occurrence of some event to turn the royal thoughts into a new channel, and when he heard of the arrival of Abdallah and of the news he brought, he clapped his hands in joy and exclaimed:

"Praises be to the prophet, our heads are worth more to day than they were yesterday."

The result of Abdallah's communication to the Shah, was an expedition to the southward.

The Shah announced it as his intention to undertake a hunting excursion upon the most extensive scale, but it was soon seen by the numbers of men, both horse and foot which were ordered to be in readiness, that something more than hunting the wild beasts of the mountains was in contemplation. His impatience to put foot in the stirrup was well seconded by that of the grand vizier, who had lately secretly groaned under the tyranny of his royal master's irritability of temper, and it

was not long before so considerable a camp was collected, that people asked, what nation was about to be conquered?

Abdallah and his father having regained peaceable possession of their house, hoped all their troubles were now at an end, but what was their dismay when they were ordered, on the part of the Shah, to hold themselves in readiness to act as guides to the expedition, as soon as it should have reached the country of the Memacenni.

"What ashes have fallen on our heads?" exclaimed Mirza Bauker, "here am I a white beard—what can I do?"

"It was an evil hour when we fell into the hands of that unsainted robber," echoed Abdallah, "what are peaceable men like ourselves to do among lion eaters?"

All their lamentations were without avail, they buckled on their swords, drew on their boots and appeared at the appointed hour, joining the numerous cavalcade that issued from the great city upon the day of the Shah's departure.

Nothing of any consequence occurred on the road, until the little army (for so it might be called), reached the Caleh Sefid. The Shah's success in the chase had been so great, that it seemed fitting to erect a *Kelleh Minar*, a pillar of sculls, as a memorial of the event, on the summit of which a spike was left vacant to receive the head of the ostensible object of the chase, that of the renowned Iskender Beg himself.

As soon as it was known among the Memacenni that the expedition was intended to act against them, Ali and Fatmeh were at once struck with the danger of their position. They were in the hands of a man, of whose true character they were imperfectly acquainted, who, out of love to them, they could not expect would risk his own existence and that of his tribe, and, for a reward, would no doubt deliver them up without compunction into the hands of their enemies. But little did they know Iskender, and still less the virtues of the wandering tribes. They immediately addressed themselves to him, and Ali speaking for both, said :

"We see the misfortune that we have brought upon your house—the Shah is directing the steps of an army against you—this must not be—give us leave to depart—we will go elsewhere, and Allah will protect us."

"What words are these?" said Iskender with vivacity; "do you take the Memacenni for dogs, that they should turn away the stranger who seeks protection at their door? Such a thing was never known—we are men of ancient days—we have eaten salt together, and, therefore, we die or live together—collect your cares into a heap, and sit down quietly upon them—sleep on your disquietude and smoke your pipe peaceably without alarm. Besides, O my brother, did you not save the life of Iskender Beg? Can he yearn towards you with one side of his heart and forget you with the other? No, his heart is all one, one whole—yours altogether. Be not afraid, we have the means of opposing forty Shahs, were they to come with forty thousand horsemen."

"But what is your mode of resistance?" said Ali, "you cannot oppose the power of the

Shah, with the frail walls and the tottering gates of this village."

"No—no!" said Iskender, "we are not men of towns and villages. We have holes and caverns in the mountains which none but ourselves are acquainted with, and therein we can bid defiance to the Shah and all his ancestry. Thither will we fly, and thither seek for refuge. There you will see what the Memacenni are, and to what extent they can burn the fathers of their enemies."

"What can we say," said Ali, "we are in your hands, whatever you command us to do, we will do, and moreover when the time for action comes, here is one hand, pointing to his outstretched arm, which will be ready to do good service, and in that hand will be a good sword, and upon that you may depend. The sword cutler of Shiraz has not made swords for nothing."

It was not long after this conversation had taken place, that Iskender called together the elders of his tribe, and laying before them the state of things, and the danger which threatened them they determined at once to abandon their villages, and to take to their mountains.

Activity very soon succeeded council, and the whole country was seen covered with processions of men, women, children, cattle laden with domestic furniture, and horses, mares, camels, asses and mules all with their heads turned towards the ascent of the adjacent mountains.

Iskender was not slow in putting his own family into motion, and with his wives and slaves, Fatmeh consorted, taking her station in the procession as the guest of the family. The rudeness of the ascent to the mountain holds would have frightened those unaccustomed to the dangers of savage life, and Fatmeh would have looked up in dismay, to certain dark indentations at the summit of apparently an inaccessible rock, had she not observed the dexterity with which all impediments were overcome by her hardy companions. After much toil and labour, she and they succeeded in reaching a cavern, which was to be their habitation, until the emergency should have passed away, whilst the men took possession of another close at hand, and thus the whole mountain, abounding in similar

cavities, by preconcerted arrangements, was occupied by the whole tribe, every family adopting a cavern, like bees in the cells of the honeycomb. Similar emergencies had often taken place, and had been met by similar expedients.

Iskender, however, who felt that an attack headed by the Shah in person, might become of more importance than one led on by one of his chiefs, took more than usual precautions, although in truth the pasess were so difficult of access, that he felt persuaded, no other missiles than the impending rocks, encompassing the road through which the invaders must necessarily pass, would be sufficient, if properly dislodged and directed, to impede their passage.

In discussing the question as to his power of defending himself, he pointed out a still more distant cavern, which he asserted, would serve as a last resource, in case the enemy should succeed in driving them from their present position. That cavern, he described as possessing a mysterious depth, which had never yet been fathomed, but the general be-

lief was, that it possessed an exit in some far distant spot. He asserted it to be under the special protection of the Dives and Peris, who had long made it their head-quarters, and from whence they sent detachments, either to assist or to annoy, all those who might have gained their favour or incurred their displeasure.

"So," said Iskender, "whatever happens, be the Shah afar off, or be he near, your sister has nothing to fear; for by Allah, she is a Peri herself, and therefore she would only be going amongst her own people, should she be obliged to seek refuge in the cave."

Fatmeh kept up her courage to the best of her power in this critical position of her affairs, but she could not help feeling great doubt, and consequent apprehension as to the result. Any act of treachery might be fatal to her, for although she and her brother placed full confidence in the honesty and fidelity of Iskender, yet could they flatter themselves that all his followers would be equally honest and faithful? On the contrary, might they not expect, should the Shah be unable to prevail by force, that he would by bribery? Possessed by such

doubts and misgivings, which they did not venture even to hint to their generous host, lest he might think them ungrateful, they passed their time very miserably. It was now impossible to recede—the mysterious cavern was their last refuge, beyond which they only saw death, or what they esteemed the greater evil of the two—slavery.

In the mean while, the Shah advanced into the very heart of the country, and was encamped at the foot of the mountain, at whose summit Iskender, his guests and tribe had taken refuge.

His Majesty had not been slow in making known the object of his expedition, and had sent repeated summonses to Iskender and the elders of his tribe, to descend from their fastnesses, and repair to his stirrup—offers of amnesty were proposed, provided he delivered up his visitors, and threats of vengeance denounced in case such proffers were unheeded.

They were unheeded, for the gallant mountaineer was true to his word, and preserved inviolate that hospitality for which he and his tribe had often risked their security. It was

at this juncture, when the Shah excited by a decided defiance of his power, requiring some faithful councillor to allay his ardour in attacking a wily enemy on his own ground, or to concert schemes to circumvent him by stratagem, it was under these circumstances that the arrival of Kaka Pembeh was announced.

This worthy, from the moment he had embarked at Abusheher to his appearance at the King's camp, had undergone so much misery and disappointment, that he longed to make his story palatable to the royal ears. He was, in truth, broken with fatigue, cast down with apprehension, scorched by the sun, his garments way-worn, and he cut so rueful a figure that he hoped by that alone, to soften the King's heart towards him. We must allow him to narrate his own adventures, which he did when called to appear before his royal master.

"How is this," said the King, as the wretched jester stood before him in fear and trembling—"whence come you, or wherefore are you come at all?"

"As I am your sacrifice," said Kaka, "my

soul is become water, and the liver of your slave has left its place; had your slave not been employed on the King's service, he would say that he could conceive no misery greater than that which he had lately devoured, but praise be to Allah, when the sun of the royal countenance shines, all other suns are sure to shine also. Whose dog am I, that should say otherwise?"

"Tell your story, little man," said the King, "and then swear on the King's head that you have spoken the truth—the Shah hears you."

"As I hope for mercy and condescension," said the jester, "as I am a dog, less than the least dog, as I pray for long life to the Shah, and perdition to his enemies, what I am about to unfold—I swear is the whole truth. In the first place, saving your royal presence, let your slave empty his whole heart by one long, comprehensive and enlarged malediction against all dervishes—let them all burn—let all their fathers and grandfathers burn—let them all be pounded in a mortar—blown from bombs—impaled on living stakes—all the miseries which your slave has undergone have arisen

from a dervish—the bankrupt dog — and Allah only knows whether he was a dervish after all. This cousin of Satan enticed your slave into a boat that swam on the sea, and which looked very pretty close to the shore—he came not himself, but fled as soon as he had persuaded your slave that he was close upon the heels of the weak one of whom he was in pursuit—*Amán! Amán!* O pity, pity. By the soul of the centre of the universe, and by his royal crown I swear that your slave's liver is turned upside down, even now at this moment when he recollects what he endured in that ship without a saint.

"Let the condescension of your Majesty's royal thoughts turn themselves to where your humble slave was seated in the midst of the great sea, there he was on a piece of wood called a ship, with high waves on one side and high waves on the other, all and each apparently eager to swallow him up; and not satisfied with that, inflicting upon him a malady which not all the united doctors of Ispahan could either produce or quell—there he was straining and looking—straining at the malady and

looking with dismay at the waves—then fearing lest the bankrupt ship would roll over and over, notwithstanding he pushed hard to keep it straight. And this please your Majesty, was unceasing, and when we were out of sight of land, in vain we called upon the steersman to put us in sight of it again, the dog's whelp only laughed and said, 'fear not and Allah is merciful,' until it began to blow such a tempest, that he also thought it right to look serious—and such a tempest that if your Majesty will condescend to look into your slave's mouth, he will see proofs of it, for where several teeth are gone, there were good ones just before it began to blow, and when he looked towards the wind and happened to open his mouth, the unsainted wind got in, and by its violence blew the teeth down your slaves throat. This by the royal soul, is particularly true!"

"Swear that again," said the Shah—"this is no child's play."

The Kaka continued, "Your slave swears that this was only the least of his evils, for Allah! Allah! where was he to sleep? where and what could he eat? The world had gone

back from him, did he venture to kneel to his prayers, down he fell—did he venture to say his Bismillah, the wind blew the words back into his throat, and as Allah is great, this proved a miracle, for blown back as they were into his body, there they continued rais ing a tempest within him and allowing him no rest. Mashallah! Your slave saw and did wonderful things, but when after ten thousand and forty difficulties, the ship got, at length, to that unblessed city of Basora, and your slave could land and proceed to discover the object of his search—let the asylum of the universe consider what were his feelings, when he was told that no Fatmeh had arrived—that no one had received news concerning her; and, therefore, his last resource was to cry *wahi! wahi!* and to walk round and round his little finger. Your slave then exclaimed—what is to be done? He, at length, perceived that his beard had been laughed at by the dervish, and then he cursed dervishes. He would have returned by land; but was told that the road was so circuitous that he would not be able to reach the foot of the throne for months, perhaps, for a year—there was but

one road left, and that was the one he had come—he was left without an alternative—your slave was impelled by one only thought, which was to fulfil the orders of the asylum of the world. He has returned—here is his unworthy neck, and here is his head—they are the only offering he has brought from his travels. In the name of Allah let the Shah strike—what more can he say?"

The Shah was so much amused by the account his jester had given of his travels, and his laughter so much excited, an event which had not occurred since that worthy's departure, that his Majesty's displeasure had considerably abated, and the utmost violence he inflicted on this occasion, was to say—Begone fool! words which sounded like the music of the spheres in the Kaka's ears. He accordingly knelt down and kissed the ground, but he was not long permitted to enjoy his ease, for events were about occurring likely to try the nerves of his heart even more than the terrors of the sea.

The troops of the Shah having attempted in vain to storm the position taken by Iskender—

a pause ensued, when a traitor appeared from the ranks of the invaded, who, for the consideration of a sum of money, offered himself to lead the way by a circuitous bye path to the very rock where the chief of the Memacenni had taken refuge. His offer being accepted, and proper precautions taken to secure his fidelity, a picked detachment of men, headed by the bravest officers were selected to follow the guide, and their departure was fixed upon for that very night.

Having made all the necessary arrangements, the Shah called Kaka Pembeh, together with Abdallah and Mirza Bauker to his presence, and spoke to them as follows.

" Dogs without compare, and filth of abomination! The Shah has hitherto overlooked your delinquencies, he has allowed his shadow to fall over you, and you have been living on as if there was no such thing as death; but now open well your ears and hear. The Lady Fatmeh is on the summit of yonder mountain. She must be in the royal presence by to-morrow at noon. You are all three to head the troops which proceed to the attack, if you fail, recol-

lect that birds of prey are swarming over our camp, and that carcases are wanted to feed them. Go—the Shah has spoken."

The unfortunate wretches looked at each other in dismay. They fell to trembling and their knocking knees could scarcely conduct them from the presence of the King without falling. Fearful of being remarked by their rigorous master, in making the most abject prostrations, they hoped to conceal their perturbation, and when they said or tried to say, "*Be cheshm*," or upon our eyes be it, it was remarked that an odd sound took place, like the inarticulations of a choaking throat. When they were out of the royal hearing, Mirza Bauker first spoke and said:

"What can an old man and an old merchant do among fighting men? what service can I perform? I shall die—see these poor old legs and see that mountain top—how am I ever to get there?"

"Accursed be the day that I ever thought of marriage," exclaimed Abdallah, "curses be upon beauty, upon women with stag eyes and cheeks of the rose! Say that we get to the top of the mountain, yet have we not those

unsainted Memacenni to cope with when we get there? My liver is fast running into water. I feel it oozing through my hands already."

"What do you complain of brother," said the Kaka to Abdallah. "You have got a wife to seek at the top of the mountain, the beloved of your choice, but what am I to do, who care neither for the wife, nor her husband, nor her husband's father, nor any of their ancestry. My going is pure child's play. Please Allah you will proceed first, and your humble slave will be quite satisfied to give up all the merit of success to you."

But notwithstanding their various lamentations, no alternative was left, and they, therefore, made their preparations; the details of which did not fail to afford subject for laughter to the whole camp, from the Shah on his musnud, to the lowest stable hind in the field. The old Mirza appeared with a spear and shield. His son carried a match-lock gun, whilst the Kaka's body was intersected at right angles by a sword as long as himself. Their departure gave a tone of merriment to the ex-

pedition, which otherwise considering the rea danger with which it was likely to be attended was considered as any thing but a joke.

In the meanwhile, Iskender having acquire confidence by the success which had hitherto attended his efforts at defence, did no cease to cheer the hearts of Fatmeh and Al by the hope of soon being free of the Shah an his troops.

"May you live for ever," exclaimed Isken der. "As I love my soul, I swear, that w shall soon be emancipated, and then *Inshallah* we will give a grand entertainment to the whol tribe. We will roast sheep and make pilloes."

Ali, however, could not comfort himself b the same feeling of security which actuate his host. He felt that when a despotic Kin takes the field against a subject, it is not a little that will deter him from perseverance He himself never ceased to be on the watch particularly before the dawn, when he fel that the attack would be made, if eve it were made. He dreaded treachery, and so much did he apprehend some sudden onset, that he always urged his siste

be ready to fly at a moment's notice, a pre-ıution which she seconded with all her power, ır she was not slow to acknowledge the great anger of their situation.

It was on the very next morning after Isken-.er's reiterations of confidence in their security, hat Ali keeping watch at the entrance of the :avern, before the dawn, and whilst nature :eposed in silence under the influence of the fading light of the moon, that he heard or thought he heard the distant sounds of horses' feet. They were very faint, and he would have doubted his powers of hearing, had his apprehension not been confirmed by the barking of the dogs belonging to the tribe. Although this was no uncommon circumstance, still he perceived by their excited manner, that something more than usual was in the wind. He again lent an anxious ear, and walking forwards some distance, he became certain that in addition to the horses' hoofs, he also heard the clang of arms and the sounds of men's voices. His first impulse was immediately to run where the women reposed, to awaken his sister and to urge her to be prepared for flight. He

then sought out Iskender, who was soon on the alert, and who having also heard the sounds of the coming assailants was not slow in preparing himself for defence. This brave man at once became aware of his danger. He bewailed in anxious words, that he was become the victim of treachery, for he asserted that few of his tribe were acquainted with the path which led to his position. He instigated Ali immediately to accompany his sister to the mysterious cavern, there to take refuge until the danger were over, and conjured him should the enemy make their way thither, to hide themselves within its intricate avenues, and there patiently to await the result. Ali was anxious, both to save his sister and to assist his friend. He, therefore, accompanied her with all haste to the cavern, and having left her at its mouth with injunctions to watch the progress of the attack, he returned with the rapidity of lightning to Iskender who having called together as many of his followers as he could muster, was preparing himself to meet his assailants. But he was not slow in perceiving that resistance

ıld be hopeless, in case the enemy were at numerous, for the tribe taken thus unawares, wed themselves tardy in responding to the l of their chief, and soon, alas! exhibited nptoms of their determination to disperse d save themselves in the intricacies of the lderness of mountains which surrounded em.

Cries and yells, and accents of haste and flight ere heard in every direction, which disheartened those who were willing to resist, nd which, indeed, indicated that the case of he brave Iskender was quite hopeless. He ınd Ali waited until they perceived the head of the column of the royal troops appearing among the rocks and brushwood of the steep ascent, and then slowly retreated towards the cavern, where Fatmeh was awaiting the awful result with fear and apprehension.

In the meanwhile slow and difficult had been the ascent. The Kaka with his desponding companions had passed the night in scrambling over rocks and execrating their destiny. In the dusk, they looked upon every indefinite object as a Memacenni—every shrub was a

robber and every stick a gun. As the morning dawned and they approached the cavern, their fears increased. They each, in their turn, made pretexts for lagging behind, but when they perceived the King's troops on the summit and heard shouts of success, they then hastened to join them, and became the most vociferous of the party.

"Mashallah! we have done well!" exclaimed Cottonwool, as he drew a long breath and stood on the crest of a rock.

"Whose dogs are the Memacenni," said Mirza Bauker, "that they should stand before us?"

"We have not caught her yet," remarked Abdallah, as he cast his eyes about in every direction.

The Kaka turning himself towards the mouth of the mysterious cavern, which was not very far distant, espied the white veil which enveloped Fatmeh, and perceiving Ali and Iskender with his gang retreating thither, he set up a shout, pointing to the spot, and immediately ordered the troops to march thitherwards.

"Seize her—seize her," he cried out to the ptain, "that is her. If you wish to call ur soul your own—go—run, bring that weak ie hither—kill everything but her."

Accordingly a rapid charge was made. Ali, ho had by this time joined his sister, aving perceived the fatal extremity to which hey were reduced, seized her by the hand and xclaimed:

"In the name of Allah let us save ourselves."

"They darted into the very recesses of the cavern, and vanished just when the Shah's party, accompanied by the Kaka and his companions, had reached its orifice.

The faithful Iskender seeing that all was over, made one desperate effort to save his guests, and planted himself at the entrance of the cave in fierce opposition to his assailants, hoping thereby to give the fugitives time to seek a hiding place. No one ventured single-handed to approach him, weilding a sword of no ordinary dimensions, his powerful form and resolute countenance, kept every one at bay; and although

the Kaka and his companions standing in the rear, did not cease roaring out:

"Seize, slay, kill, crush his soul, demolish his liver," and such like expressions, still there he stood, no one approaching him.

At length, Iskender seeing some of his assailants preparing their matchlock guns to fire at him, announced that he was ready to surrender provided his life was saved, a proposition which having been referred to the Kaka was accepted, and his arms being pinioned, he was thus made prisoner, he and his followers, and conducted before the jester and his companions.

"Dog of a Memacenni!" exclaimed the Kaka, "where is the woman?"

"What do I know," said Iskender, "the cavern is large and so is the world—Heaven only knows where she is."

"Go, seek her and bring her hither," said the Kaka, "or by the head of the King, the world will soon be too small for you."

"Orders are easily given and words are easily spoken," replied the robber chief, "but it will

quire more wit than your humble slave's, and, erhaps, more than even your's to seek her in his awful place, where no one under the rank f jin has ever ventured to proceed."

This speech threw no little terror into the eart of the Kaka and his companions, for they ad already began to look upon their prisoner s something of the devil kind, and his words and gestures confirmed their fears. They found it was in vain to give orders, where no one was willing to proceed, for men and officers overtaken by fears of supernatural agencies all drew back from the search. At length, the trio having satisfied themselves that they had discovered the place of Fatmeh's retreat, and in fact secured her person could her hiding place be found, they determined to leave the troops to keep watch at the mouth of the cavern, and proceed to give an account of their proceedings to the Shah, taking the prisoner Iskender with them.

Having descended to the camp, they straightway sought an audience of the King.

"How is this?" said the Shah, when he

perceived them and their prisoner, "how is this, have you brought me a man instead of a woman?"

The crafty jester perceiving that he would, perhaps, have played his last anticks in this world should he not succeed in exciting the Shah's mirth, put forth the whole of his craft to produce that effect, and screwing up his body as he spoke into its best contortions, and inflecting his voice into its most varied tones, he said:

"Let the countenance of the asylum of the universe only shine but this once on his slave, and he will tell all."

"He and these bits of scum," pointing to Abdallah and Mirza Bauker, "having left the august presence, arrayed themselves for the fight, and looking like Rustams about to seek the White Demon, ascended yonder mountain with so much zeal for the service of the King of Kings, that they left portions of their unworthy bodies on all the rocks and stones over which they stumbled, may maledictions overtake them and the Memacenni. Having driven the enemy from yonder hole, they stood on the

:k and looked into another, where they saw
th their eyes the Lady Fatmeh, wrapt in
r veil and ready to be taken. Your slaves
mediately proceeded thither, when reaching
ie entrance, they perceived the weak one
ithin the cavern flying for her life, and this
on of a burnt father," pointing to Iskender,
' standing in array against your slaves. What
lid your slaves do? they seized him, bound
him, and brought him hither."

"And, wherefore, dog of a mountebank," said the Shah, "did you not bring the woman also?"

"As I am your sacrifice," said the Kaka, "in that consists the whole of my story. We have got the woman safe within the cavern—there she is as safe as my tongue is within my mouth—but as true as the asylum of the world hath royal ears—as certain as his royal heart beateth within his royal breast, so true is it that that unsainted cavern is the residence of jins, he devils and she devils, monstrous dragons, fairies, spirits and gholes, and every other similar abomination, and that none of the sons of men have hitherto ventured within

it—such is the truth—thither is the Lady Fatmeh fled—none of the royal troops would follow her. This cow of a Memacenni would not follow; we three pieces of dirt could not follow, although we put one leg before the other; yet, as true as the Shah sits on his throne, I swear, that instead of going forward we walked backwards, and thus situated—thus without power—without help, we are come to rub our foreheads upon the royal threshold, and to seek relief from the royal mind."

"Bring hither my horse," exclaimed the Shah, "order out the gholams—we will ourselves proceed to the cavern, and if ye have told me a lie, by the Shah's jika I swear, that the Shah will make death uneasy to you."

Immediately the whole camp was in motion, the body guard were summoned to appear, they were soon mounted and in array, and before an hour had elapsed, the Shah was in his saddle, and the cries of the heralds and executioners had announced his departure.

Kaka and his companions followed in silent trepidation, but, at the same time, swaggering

with confidence, certain to find the object of their search, and in such august company, ready to meet whatever devilry the cavern might choose to pour forth.

Iskender properly escorted, was appointed guide to the expedition, and although his whole thoughts were intent upon protecting Ali and Fatmeh from the King's vengeance, yet he lost not for a moment his presence of mind, or debased himself by fawning and adulation.

"Whatever is—is!" he exclaimed to himself in a consolatory sigh, as he proceeded to his post at the head of the procession, and after having picked his way through the rocks, which encumbered the sides of the steep ascent, he, at length, succeeded in placing his Majesty in safety at the very entrance of the mysterious cavern.

After allowing himself and party breathing time, and a consultation having been held upon the best mode of proceeding in the search, the Shah alighted from his horse, and announced his intention of walking forward in

person. The Kaka had in the meanwhile made anxious enquiries of the officer on guard, whom he had left on the watch, whether anything or any body had issued from the cavern, when being assured that all was safe, he assumed such an air of swagger and self-confidence, that he dispelled in great measures the fears generally entertained concerning the mysterious inhabitants of the place. As the royal party began to make their way into the dark and lofty cave, great was the commotion which their appearance produced amongst the innumerable bats and birds which made it their residence, and so strange was the noise created by the flapping of their wings, and their flittings to and fro, that it was not impossible such proceedings might have given rise to the popular superstition concerning it.

True was it, however, that almost every man within the cave, beginning with the Shah and descending to the meanest foot-boy, were prepared to see something extraordinary and to meet with strange adventures.

When his Majesty had reached the very

tre without meeting any impediment, he ered Iskender to stand before him, as ll as the Kaka and his companions.

" Where is she?" said the Shah, " father of gs, speak—wherefore are we come here if we id not what we seek?"

" As I am your sacrifice," said Iskender, the cavern is large—full of hollow places hich branch out into various directions—who an tell whither they may lead?"

" 'Tis evident the woman has secreted herself—light torches and send men in various directions," said the King, " a handsome reward attends him who finds her."

Upon which detached parties proceeded in every direction where the cavern diverged, whilst the Shah took his station in the centre thereof, the Kaka, Abdallah and Mirza Bauker standing before him and awaiting the light of his countenance. Of a sudden a cry was heard which indistinctly reached the ears of the Shah, and soon a messenger, with a torch in his hand, announced that the brightness of day was perceived in a distant part, and that an

exit had been found. Thither the Shah and his suite immediately repaired, and true enough he found an entrance to the cave, part of which had apparently been fashioned by the hands of man.

As soon as Iskender was conducted to this place he exclaimed:

"May the Shah live for ever, this is the real abode of the jins and the peris—this is of what we have been told."

"But where is the Lady Fatmeh?" exclaimed the Shah with impatience, when turning up his eyes he perceived a rock, standing conspicuous in the entrance, sculptured into the figure of a woman. As soon as Iskender perceived it he fell to the ground and exclaimed:

"Allah, there is but one Allah—did not your slave speak the truth? this is the work of the jins—this is the lady," pointing to the rock, "she has become stone—where else can we find her?"

His words evidently produced a strong sensation on all present. The discovery of this singular specimen of workmanship in a place so distant

om the haunts of man, gave rise to feelings of ertainty that supernatural powers had been at ork, and Iskender's suggestion was immediately adopted as conclusive.

"Allah! Allah!" broke out from every mouth, accompanied by the words "*Ajaib, Ajaib,* wonderful, wonderful!"

Every one present looked into his neighbour's face in silence, with awe and fear in his countenance. The Shah too caught the general infection. He said nothing—his silence added greatly to the general apprehension, and the longer it lasted, the more vivid became the impression that they stood on a spot which was under the immediate influence of beings uncontrollable by the power of man. A strong sensation soon began to make itself manifest of the necessity of leaving so dangerous a spot, which was seconded by the Shah himself, and he was not long in returning whence he had come, followed in silence by his whole retinue.

When he reached the open country, and was about to descend the mountain to his camp, he enquired for his former guide, the

Memacenni chief, and ordered him to appear before him. He awaited some time before he renewed his injunction, when he was informed that he was no where to be found; the vigilant freebooter in the hurry and agitation of the moment, had taken advantage of the negligence of his guards, and had glided away unheeded into the depths and fastnesses of the adjacent mountains. To seize him again, the Shah at once saw would be impossible, and thus finding all his labour vain and his scheme frustrated, he broke out into violent anger, which he intended should fall upon his wretched victims, the Kaka, Abdallah, and Mirza Bauker.

The first of these, however, seeing how affairs were likely to terminate, at once adopted his own line of action, and calculating upon the effects which his buffoonery would produce upon his royal master, suddenly espoused the royal cause with all the vigour of his zeal and humour. With unparalleled effrontery addressing Abdallah and Mirza Bauker, he exclaimed,

"Oh ye jackass dogs! oh ye men without

shame! is it thus ye treat the royal beard? leading it up unsainted mountains, into pestiferous holes, out of one bowel of the earth into another, all for nothing, all to screen your mule hides from harm. But as I am the least of dogs, ye shall not get off thus—here, men of blood—here ye strikers and lords of the stick—here, come forth, beat the dog's sons till our Lord of Lord and King of Kings cries stop."

The Shah in his astonishment at his jeste'rs outbreak, stood mute with one finger in his mouth, uncertain whether to storm and rail or laugh and approve, until at length he became so struck with the singularity of the exhibition, and so amused with his jester's buffoonery, that he allowed him to proceed. The executioners who were always at hand near the King's person, seeing that his Majesty encouraged the Kaka and confirmed his orders by the countenance he gave, immediately seized upon the ill-fated Abdallah and his father, and notwithstanding their cries and supplications, threw their feet into the air and administered so severe a bastinado on their soles, that they writhed with torture.

"Pity, oh pity!" exclaimed Abdallah, "by the head of the King, I am ignorant of all things—I have done nothing—I am a dog —whither she went I know not—pity oh pity!"

"See the wretch," exclaimed the Kaka, "he brings a weak one before the blessed presence of the Shah, he presents her to him—he then causes her to fly—then leads the centre of all things into perverse caverns and over unblessed roads, and now he cries pity, oh pity!—by the royal beard, and by my unworthy head, there is no pity—strike, strike," he continued to exclaim, whilst the same punishment was inflicted upon the unfortunate Mirza Bauker, who, in his misery, almost gave up the ghost with pain and fright.

The Shah having, at length, cried *Bus!* enough, he ordered the poor wretches to be thrown on the side of the road, and leaving them to their fate, proceeded on his journey, promising to himself another morning's amusement from the trouble into which he intended to throw his jester as soon as he reached his capital.

The two beaten men, when left to themlves, were heard to bemoan their fate after e following manner:

"O woe! O woe! What dirt have we eaten! Wherefore did our evil destiny lead us to seek is misfortune! Ashes have fallen on our heads. May we defile the graves of Kings and great eople for evermore! Why did we ever seek heir filthy presence! Wherefore did we forake our own condition in life! Whose dog is a King that we should go near him. O woe! O woe! Curses on all Khans, on all Mirzas, Executioners and Buffoons! Curses too upon all beautiful women! May all houris burn—may their livers drop and their souls perish! Why did we ever seek her! O that we were seated on our bench in the bazaar! O that we had never been near a court! better is peace with humility, than turmoil with grandeur,—*Amán! Amán!* pity, pity—who will take care of us? Whither shall we go?"

And thus ends our story. Whether the lady Fatmeh became a stone or not, it is for the jins to say, but true it is, that there is a mountain pass on the high road to the coast

of the Persian gulf to this day, wh
the *Dochter* or the maiden, a
which, perhaps, may have tak
period of this our history.
plain that he was too active
to seek safety in flight, an
Allah best knows what beca
one can believe that he all
taken, as long as he had
upon.

"Mashallah! O well
soon as my friend had
story.

"You have, indeed,
of womankind, which
advantages which our
yours, can scarcely b
you live, tell me, wha
he finds the character
him in so bright a
possible that such ca

"By your soul," s
knows what he will

enough good sense to admire
my kind, and that could such a
meh be found in Persia, he
ost to obtain possession of
to be entirely sated with
tellect of the women who
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Majesty, was my
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o visit him.
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settled himself in one
s, whose upper rooms
ve view over the plain,
race the whole extent of

mind, and destroying the causes which tend to her debasement, and (by way of encouraging my friend in his vocation,) I added, such a result should it ever become manifest, will prove to you more than aught else, how important is the power of fiction when properly wielded."

In concluding our conversation, we were agreed, that truth discovered by man's own reason and experience, was of infinitely greater advantage to him than acquired through other channels, and that a King such as the Shah, despotic and self-willed, whose natural perversity has been fed by flattery and subserviency, would be more likely to pursue his own discovery, than to adopt the doctrines which might broadly be proposed to him by others.

We then parted mutually pleased; he promising to inform me, after having related his story to his royal master, of the effect it produced.

VISIT V.

DURING the winter, the Shah remained constant to the walls of his palace in Tehran, but on the first opening of spring, he ordered the summer residence of the Takht Kajar, its gardens, fountains, and kiosks to be prepared, and thither he repaired, taking with him only a few of his favourites, courtiers and ladies of the harem, for the purpose of enjoying the invigorating air of the mountains, and the delights of the returning season. Among those who accompanied his Majesty, was my friend the poet laureat, who, when the excursion was over, invited me to visit him.

He informed me that during his stay at the Takht, the Shah having settled himself in one of the summer-houses, whose upper rooms command an extensive view over the plain, and which also embrace the whole extent of

the city—had devoted a whole afternoon to quiet and repose, and ordered him to relate a story.

On this occasion, his Majesty deviated from the usual routine of the court, having allowed women to be present, and in consequence had ordered the poet to be so placed that his voice might be heard whilst he could not see the persons of the King and his ladies. He then related the story, which we have just recorded, and he now informed me (as he afterwards heard) that the effect which it produced upon the women was incredulity—incredulity that such a being as Fatmeh could exist. He added, such is the narrow compass of their intellect, that they willingly believe in the existence of giants as tall as cypress trees, or magicians who can turn a mountain into gold; but of the existence of a virtuous and magnanimous woman, they are incredulous.

His Majesty in a subsequent conversation applauded him very much for having selected such a story for such an occasion; for he avowed himself pleased, that his ladies should be taught that woman, when her energies are

used, can exercise them as efficiently, and ith as much spirit as man.

My friend then told me that the Shah, whose ind is devoted to literature, and particularly to oetry, conversed with him freely upon the arts f invention and story telling. With respect to nvention, his Majesty spoke sensibly, and for monarch very modestly, for he avowed that ne had often endeavoured to invent a story, but without success, adducing for a reason, that in order to be able to invent, it is necessary to possess a stock of facts beforehand, upon which to found invention.

"A King," he said, "cannot acquire such a store with the same facility as one who has the power of roaming about the world, in all countries and among all ranks of people. The man who can do that best, should he be endowed with other requisite qualities of the mind, will be the most successful story teller. Of poetry, the range may be less, for sensations exist in every heart, and they form the ground work of that species of invention. His Majesty then requested me," said the Mirza, "in my next essay, to turn my thoughts to matters miraculous and supernatural. He

conceived," he said, "that he himself might compose a story, when he could bring jins, giants and magicians to his assistance: for whenever a difficulty occurred, it was easy to introduce a jin to set it right, and that nothing was so consolatory to a heroine as the certainty, when held in durance vile by a giant, that she might be emancipated by the power of a magician—but," he added, "unless I have those helps, I confess, I feel myself greatly at a loss, for men and women must be what Allah has made them, and it is ever a difficult undertaking to conform to truth."

The Mirza then informed me, that in furtherance of his Majesty's wish, he had composed a story, founded upon a circumstance, miraculous and supernatural.

"But," he added, "far from finding it easy, I have on the contrary, laboured under much difficulty to make it at all interesting. It is easy, in truth, as his Majesty remarked, to introduce the machinery of fabulous and unearthly beings, but the art is, to do so with an appearance of probability, which ought to make the hearer feel that such things might be. If I had

opened the tale by saying, once upon a time there existed a giant so immense, that while he stood upon the earth, he rested his back against the moon, and warmed his hands at the sun: such images would be called extravagant, and preposterous. Or, had I said, that my heroine, apprehending the persecutions of a tyrant, had by the power of a peri thrown herself into an impending cloud, and dissolving herself upon him in a torrent of rain, had drowned him and his followers; such an assertion would so totally destroy verisimilitude, that the effect could only produce ridicule. But, in the story, which I will now relate, I have adopted just so much of what is supernatural, as I hope will give an air of semblance and possibility to my narrative, and this without alarming or greatly offending common sense. I have carried a single incongruity, through a course of natural consequences, which has approached a natural conclusion."

I quite agreed with my friend in his remarks and added, "that the reason why the "Tales of the Thousand and one Nights," are so agreeable

to children is, that their minds not having yet ascertained what is truth, they can bear the recital of stories in which giants, fairies, genii and magicians, act a principal part with great satisfaction, seeing that their senses have not acquired that degree of experience to feel shocked by impossibilities."

We then settled ourselves in a small room situated over the entrance gate of his house, called a *Balakhoneh*, or upper house, which, enjoying the shade of the chenar tree, situated immediately before it, as well as the music of a rushing stream, he emphatically called a poet's nest. Here he said he could enjoy meditation, apart from the world, though still in it, surrounded by cheerful objects, and yet not annoyed by obtrusion. We seated ourselves upon his carpet, each with a kalian in hand, and after the enjoyment of a few whiffs, which are ever to the Persian a sort of preliminary, and often an emblem of what he has to say, my friend entered upon his narrative as follows:—

HISTORY OF MOBAREK SHAH AND THE MAGICIAN.

AMONG the successors of the great Jenghiz Khan, one was called Mobarek Shah, to whom here occurred an adventure so singular, and which produced consequences so full of results, that had the narrative thereof fallen into the hands of a professed spinner of wit, we doubt not but that he might have composed several pleasant books. We are told that he lived in the city of Cashgar, and that he was a Prince of amiable qualities, a great lover of justice, and devoted to the good of his people. He was ever active and zealous in searching out abuses, and frequently strolled about the city in disguise, first adopting one character then another, by which means, he not only became generally acquainted with the tempers and humours of his subjects, but often acquired hints from their conversation upon the art of governing them.

It so happened that in one of these rambles, he determined to refresh his person by taking

a hot bath, and for that purpose he entered the principal *hummum* of the city, disguised as a respectable merchant, wearing the usual sheep-skin cap, which was, indeed, commonly adopted by all ranks, from the monarch to the peasant. Having performed the necessary ablutions, he lay himself down on a carpet, in his bathing clothes, in order to cool previously to dressing. He had scarcely done so, when a hard featured, weather-beaten man, coarsely dressed, made his appearance, and spreading a carpet close to where Mobarek Shah lay extended, began to undress himself preparatory to entering the bath. He possessed a quick and penetrating eye, and slowly divesting himself of the shawl round his waist and folding up his cloak, he cast his eyes about him with an inquisitive look, and particularly upon his neighbour, whose handsome clothes appeared to attract his notice.

The hall in which this took place was surrounded by a lofty cupola, lines being passed across it in various directions, on which were hung the bathing linen to dry. Surrounding it, on elevated platforms, were spread carpets,

upon which, those who had bathed were reposing, whilst other carpets were ready prepared for those who might be expected. The bathing attire consisted of a white napkin round the head, of a large shawl or wrapper thrown loosely over the body, and of a second wrapper tied round the waist, falling to the ancles, and the congregration thus attired and in repose, looked like corpses laid out in their winding sheets in a large tomb. Such was now the case—not a word was uttered—no one moved about, excepting the bathing attendants, who presented a pipe, coffee, or sherbet to those just issued from the bath, and the whole was conducted with a decency and decorum, which proved how gentle were the manners of the good people of Cashgar.

On this occasion, just as the stranger before mentioned, and whom I shall call Chacal Beg, was about to take off his shirt, having already put on his middle wrapper, his neighbour the Shah reposing with closed eyes; quiet prevailing throughout the hall, at that moment, a strange and unearthly rum-

bling sound was heard, and instantly succeeded by so violent and so sudden a concussion, that soon all the inmates of the building were aroused and thrown into alarm by the awful consciousness of an earthquake, and as a poet said, all the lions were turned into lionesses from very fear. Without a moment's thought, every one jumped up and rushed out of the building, all excepting Chacal, who paused and looked around him.

The earthquake disturbed all the dust in the building, which flying about blinded men's eyes, and greatly increased the confusion—the linen dropped from the lines, the long poles which reposed against the walls, used for extending the linen fell with a crash; the tin and brass pots, the crockery, and things suspended on high fell—and the even walls which had stood for ages, were heard to crack, and in some parts rent from top to bottom. During this confusion, Chacal stood unmoved—the clothes of the bathers had dropped from their places and were strewn about the floor. He deliberately began to dress himself again, but instead of

returning to his own, he coolly helped himself to those of his neighbour, the Shah Mobarek—he put on his caba, adopted the hawl around the waist, covered himself with his handsome cloak, and lastly fitted on his cap, leaving his own garments, with his weather beaten cap, to the possession of whomsoever might choose to adopt them. Having so done, he slipped out of the bath by a back door, and finding himself in the street, strode away in haste, leaving that quarter of the town as far behind him as he could. He entered the great bazaars, where he found all the world in a high state of consternation, and mixing in the crowd, at length entered a barber's shop with the intention of getting his head shaved.

The barber was engaged in shaving, and when Chacal appeared, he said to him :

"Light of my eyes you are welcome, sit, have a little patience, and I will soon be at your service." As he continued to use his razor, he also continued to exercise his tongue, saying, "although we have had a misfortune in the earthquake, yet praise be to Allah, you are come at a fortu-

nate hour for shaving. You slave has made use of his astrolabe this morning, and the moon tells him we may diminish the quantity of hair in the world with safety. God be thanked, we are understanders of things! May the riches of the Shah increase, his kingdom is not wanting in astrologers—Cashgar is a blessed place." Upon this, having finished his customer's adjustment, and duly washed and trimmed him up, he invited Chacal to take his place, to which that personage acceded, after doffing his newly acquired cap, depositing it on the seat he had just quitted.

When this new head was placed before the barber he exclaimed,

"Mashallah! wonderful head have we got here, the wise man is known before he speaks, the fool is known because he speaks. The wise recognise each other, whilst the fool thinks all are fools but himself."

He then began his work, exclaiming and making use of flattering expressions, to which Chacal listened in silence. During this interval, the customer who had been shaved, retreating to the place where Chacal had left his

', was taken up in inspecting that commodity
:h evident marks of intense curiosity: turning
irst to the left then to right, he looked within
and then examined the piece of shawl sewn on
e top. Having done this with an expression of
rprise not unmixed with awe, he gazed upon
hacal, still continuing his survey of the cap, at
ne time putting it down, then taking it up again,
hen feeling something hard within the lining, he
nserted his hand and drew forth two small seals.
No sooner had he inspected them, then recogniz-
ng the royal signets, his cheek turned pale and
nis hand trembled as he replaced them in their
priginal position, and then returning the cap
where he had found it, he remained transfixed
with surprise, and uncertain what to do. This
customer happened to be a journeyman
to the Shah's principal cap maker, who
having only a few days before been at
work upon this very cap, knowing that
it was intended for the royal head, at once, re-
cognized his own stitches and fashion. The
conclusion to which he came, particularly when
he had seen the seals, was that the person to

whom it belonged, could be no other than the Shah himself.

He had never seen the King, although he was aware that he frequently perambulated the city in disguise, and the more he gazed and cogitated, the more he became convinced that the person before him was that august personage.

He soon communicated the discovery he had made to another customer newly arrived, who having caught the awe inspiring contagion, was not slow in informing the passers bye in the street, that the Shah himself was then in the shop, and actually having his head shaved. The commotion produced by this circumstance, in so remote a quarter of the city, may be better imagined than described, for although it was esteemed dangerous for a subject to recognize his King when supposed to be incognito, still, in this instance, it was impossible to restrain peeping, sly looks and lingerings at the corner of the streets.

When Chacal arose from under the hands of the barber, to his surprise, on turning round, he discovered several men standing before him,

th every appearance in their looks and com-
rtment of paying him the most unbounded
spect.

He no sooner proceeded to regain possession
f his cap, than the journeyman presented it to
im with every demonstration of the greatest
eference, making becoming prostrations and
sing appropriate expressions.

"What has happened?" said Chacal, "are beards cheap that our's is to be laughed at?"

"We are the slaves of the asylum of the world," said one.

"Whose dogs are we," said another, "that should dare to stand before a King of Kings, the refuge of nations?"

"Are ye mad, oh men!" said Chacal, not having seized their meaning, "are ye mad, and has wind entered your brain. Who am I that should thus be addressed? My father and mother were honest folks, and I, unworthy that I am, am their progeny—what means then refuge of nations and King of Kings?"

During this speech, the cap maker's journeyman had whispered to the barber, that he whom

he had just shaved was the Shah, and confirmed his words by the proof he had discovered.

Upon which the barber fairly prostrated himself before Chacal, and said:

"See the fortunate hour during which the dwelling of your slave has been thus visited! Praises be to Allah, the stars are true, whatever we poor mortals may say, there is no denying their influence. They have led the footsteps of our King of Kings into my humble dwelling, and have guided this too fortunate hand over the august surface of his imperial head!—Forgive the faults and imperfections of your slave."

Chacal, during this speech began to gain an insight into his new position, but still he professed ignorance.

"Wherefore, oh men!" said he, "do ye speak to me thus? Cannot a man sit down and be shaved without being called King of Kings—is he to be lauded for nothing, and to be revered for that which he does not possess? Speak, oh men, and tell me wherefore is this?"

"How," said the journeyman, "has not your slave seen the imperial seals within the lining of that cap, which his own unworthy hands has helped to fashion and make. 'Tis by that we knew that none but our King of Kings could enjoy possession of such seals; and, therefore, that you, oh Shah, can be none other than our sovereign, and we your humblest of servants."

At hearing these words, Chacal immediately applied his hand into the lining of his cap, and there, indeed, he found the seals.

We must here pause awhile, to explain who and what was the man we have called Chacal Bey.

He was born on the borders of the lake of Van, in the village of Maug, the inhabitants of which are composed almost entirely of families producing Magi or Magicians, and at an early age he was taught many of the secrets of the black art, by which means he could hold converse with demons, and acquired considerable familiarity with jins and other unearthly beings. He had learnt the science of divining by the Koran, of casting fate by dice, of explaining dreams from the cabalis-

tical book, and of taking up serpents without fear of harm. He had, moreover, been inducted into the profound mystery of vivyfying a dead body, throwing his own life into it, and leaving his own body dead in its place, and only longed for an opportunity of trying a still greater feat, that of exchanging faces with another, without losing the individuality of either. Thus instructed and educated, he left his country a professed magician. In his dress and appearance, he did not differ from the other inhabitants of Roum, excepting in the sheep-skin cap, for his object was to keep his profession a secret, and it was only when the opportunity offered, he asserted his character and practiced his art for the furtherance of his views of obtaining money, of which he was greedy. He made the experiment of exchanging faces with his own father, in which he succeeded so well, that he longed to have an opportunity to repeat it in some more profitable manner. On that occasion it is recorded, that having secured his father in his own image, he himself having become his father, he inflicted upon him so

sound a beating, that he was, the wonder of all magicians.

When he beheld the royal signets, holding them as he did in his hand, his mind was suddenly struck by the thought of the immense advantage which he might derive from this discovery.

The seal of Soloman, he knew was the great talisman which ensured to the possessor the obedience and agency of many supernatural beings, and he also knew that the seals of Kings partook of the nature of that great talisman. What then was his emotion when he found himself in actual possession of two royal seals, instruments of such unbounded importance, that he was not long in making up his mind what to do. Eyeing the barber, the journeyman and the others who were assembled in the shop, he adopted a cast of features, and assumed manners which would confirm them in their suspicions that he was the King, when, at the same time, placing the cap on his head and inserting the seals into his bosom, he stalked out of the shop, saying,

"When the Shah is in disguise let no one

notice him; he goes upon the business of Allah and the state, let him depart in peace."

So saying, he immediately quitted *that* part of the town, walked forward, and having bought a sheet of paper, ink and a drinking cup, he proceeded without the city to a *pool* of clear water, on the borders of which he seated himself. Here he produced the seals, and having made an impression of them on *various* parts of the paper by the means of water, he washed them off into his drinking cup, then uttering certain mysterious words of belief, and using a form of invocation proper to the occasion, he drank off the contents of the cup.

Having done this, he felt a strange sensation come over his face, jerking his nose, blinking his eyes, contracting his lips and lengthening his chin and beard, by which he understood that the transformation which he desired was perfected.

He straightway bent himself over the water to inspect his face, when strange to say, instead of himself, he saw one whom he knew must be the Shah being the same he had seen in the bath.

At this sight, he broke out into coarse ejacula-

tions of delight, and without delay bent his steps towards the city. Having entered the gates, he perceived that the guard stationed there, the door-keepers and the officers, eyed him with a certain look of submission and awe, which told him that he was recognized as the Shah, and when he made his way through the streets and bazaars, he every now and then caught the expression of an eye, which indicated humility and apprehension.

Having entered the palace itself, there he was recognized at once, and there, indeed, his troubles began, for how was he to adapt his ignorance to the forms and manner of life of a Shah? He was coarse in his nature, having passed a rude unsettled existence among wild and uncivilized people, and he felt that in undertaking to personify a King, he must make so many mistakes, that in the end they would not fail to create suspicion as to his identity. He found that he was wrong in entering the palace by the principal gate and recollecting himself to be in disguise, he retraced his steps, and after some search, having found the private

entrance which he made no doubt the Shah was wont to adopt on such like excursions, he entered therein.

The doubt which most perplexed him was, whether the King had returned to his palace immediately after the earthquake, or whether he was still absent; but when he found that he had himself obtained precedence, a fact which he ascertained by the prostrations of those who received him at the palace gate, he then became more easy in his mind.

He knew that his face only was changed, his person remaining the same; this was an imperfection in his art which he could not remedy, but wearing as he did the clothes of the Shah, he flattered himself that no remarks on that head could be elicited at present. He perceived by the actions and demeanour of the palace attendants, that when he had got within the private entrance, his incognito ceased, for every one was then on the alert to wait upon him.

The true Shah evidently was expected and anxiety prevailed as to his safety after the occurrence of the earthquake, consequently

when Chacal appeared, universal joy manifested itself. He was conscious that his voice was not changed, and that circumstance made him slow to speak, he, therefore, proceeded in silence, following the footsteps of two under heralds who walked before him and led the way to his own apartment.

As soon as he entered the precincts of the harem, whither it was the custom for the Shah to proceed on returning from an excursion in disguise, the heralds cried with a loud voice.

"*Shah geldi!* the King is come."

When they had left him, he was received by the chief of the eunuchs and a band of women, who made a lane for him to pass through, putting forth their best looks to receive the favour of a glance from the royal eye.

Accustomed as they had been to the kind and winning manners of the real King, who always spoke with condescension and affability to every one on his path, they were utterly surprised and awe struck, when they remarked, that on this occasion, he walked by without saying a word, and without even a sign

of recognition to those whom before he never failed to notice. When, at length, he entered his own private room, it was whispered throughout the courts of the palace. "The King is out of humour," and straightway every one was set a thinking.

"What has happened? what news is this? ah, it is the earthquake—damage has been done—poor wretches are ruined—perhaps some have been killed."

These and such like words and speculations were made and expressed; so that a general gloom pervaded the harem, and the hearts of the women and slaves.

Chacal having seated himself, was immediately attended by the head valet, who disrobed him, taking off his dusty garments to his very shirt, and then called in a second man, who forthwith, his arms bare and his skirts girded, approached him, kneaded him all over, rubbed his arms, back, legs and feet, and so entirely took possession of his person, that Chacal could scarcely stir hand or foot.

In this manner was the Shah pleased to be

operated upon, after he had undergone the fatigue of a long perambulation throughout the city, and thus did the operator act, supposing that he was practising upon his real master. He was the King's chief barber and shampooer, his office being to keep the person of his royal master in repair. Inspecting every decay and reporting upon every imperfection, he was surprized whilst he rubbed the head and the nape of the neck, to observe that the right ear possessed a slit which had never before come under his inspection. He paused and looked and looked again. He was in doubt whether to make known his discovery, not willing to speak unless spoken to, when no longer master of himself, and trusting to the known beneficence of his royal master, he exclaimed:

"As your slave is the sacrifice of the asylum of the world—here is a slit!" and at same time touched his ear.

Chacal began to burn like a piece of live coal, so overcome was he by this unwelcome piece of intelligence; he said nothing, but restricted himself to trying his voice in a

growl, which so startled the barber, that he fairly jumped on one side from apprehension. Looking into Chacal's face, he discovered him, indeed, to be the Shah, a fact which he began to doubt, when without saying more, though he pondered much, he completed his task and took his leave in all haste.

As soon as he left the palace, he whispered to his acquaintance the observations he had made—that the King's ear had been slit since last he shampooed him, and that his voice was changed since the earthquake, assertions which caused every one to exclaim, "Ajaib, wonderful!"

Chacal having clothed himself from head to foot in royal apparel, the evening meal was then served up in the customary state, by the servants appointed to that office. In so doing, they could not fail to remark that there was something very strange in the whole manner and demeanour of the King—he said nothing—he gazed like one who saw matters of state for the first time—he eyed every thing and every one with curiosity—whatever he did, was full of awkwardness, more

partaking of the manners of a man of the woods, than those of a courtier. After having seized upon the food before him with an avidity and a coarseness of demeanour, unequalled by mule drivers, and having gorged himself to surfeiting, he perfectly electrified his servants, by, at length, uttering one word, and that word was *Shirab*, wine. Now Mobarek Shah, besides being the most polished and urbane prince in the east, was also one of the most pious, one who adhered so scrupulously to the ordinances of the prophet, that he would rather have cut off his hand, than allowed it to be the bearer of the proscribed liquor to his lips. How much the attendants who now heard the order for wine were astonished, it is easier to imagine than to describe — they stood with their mouths open, and their eyes staring, looking at each other, and then at their supposed master, until another order, louder and more affirmative to the same effect, issued from Chacal, which made them flee with apprehension. In an instant, the news rang throughout the palace and the harem, that the Shah

wanted "wine"—men lifted up their *hands* in astonishment, women giggled and whispered, and exclaimed—every one was in a state of bewilderment, and many began to hint *that* the Shah had run mad and wanted wine, all in consequence of the earthquake. No other excuse could be alleged than the earthquake,—that event accounted for all—the slit in the ear, the silence, the voracity and grossness, and last of all, the call for wine, every thing was accounted for by the earthquake.

Wine having been procured, it was presented with all proper decorum, by the lord steward, to the supposed Shah, who very soon suited the action to the word, and drank thereof, at one draught, more than had been known to exist within the walls of the palace during the whole reign. Refreshed, invigorated and excited by this act, Chacal acquired courage in his new position, and began to think that he might now safely give his fears to the wind, and enjoy himself with the good things by which he was surrounded.

It was a custom with Mobarek Shah after having partaken of his evening's meal, for the

head eunuch to make his appearence, and inquire which of his Majesty's wives or slaves, it was his pleasure should attend him in order to enliven him by her talents for music, or by her conversation; and for a long time back the answer had invariably been, the Lady Khoshboo. Now the Lady Khoshboo was a princess of the greatest beauty, of much wit and most refined manners, who had so captivated the monarch by her charms, that he was scarcely ever happy out of her company. She had long been the favourite wife—he loved her with a sincere and ardent passion, which was as sincerely and ardently returned, for the sentiments of Khoshboo towards Mobarek were so pure and disinterested, that their loves might have been made the subject of a poem, as fairly as those of the celebrated Leileh and Majnun, or of Ferhad and Shireen. She, be it said, being conscious of her power, and secure in the affections of her lord and master, would not listen to the reports spread concerning him, on the occasion here described, but smiling in her contempt at the falsehood, was only waiting

for the moment when she should be called, as usual, into the presence.

When the head eunuch appeared before Chacal, and bowing low, asked him the question,

"Which of the slaves of your Majesty's household, does the asylum of the universe command should be brought before the august presence?"

What was the surprise, the astonishment, the horror of the formal man of women, to hear these words, "The fattest!" Fixed to the earth, like one in a fit, the bewildered man stirred neither hand nor foot, uncertain whether he had heard right or not.

"The fattest," he exclaimed, with a tremulous voice, "did your Majesty say?"

"The fattest," again exclaimed Chacal, in a voice of thunder; "go bring the fattest—what more do you require, dog? am I not the King?".

The awe-struck eunuch disappeared with singular haste, quaking from head to foot, and convinced that his royal master had been struck by some fatal malady of the brain.

"As Allah is great," said he retiring, "the

earthquake cannot have done this also! He cannot want a fat slave, because the ground has shaken—or has it, perhaps, shaken all sense from his head."

However, he went his way, and when every one expected that the Lady Khoshboo would, as usual, proceed to pay her evening visit, and when she herself arrayed in her most fascinating attire, was already making her way to the royal presence, what was her surprise and dismay, and the surprise and wonderment of all, when the head eunuch announced that the fattest of the slaves was ordered to attend! The fall of a thunderbolt could not have excited more sensation. The fattest! the fattest! was echoed about from mouth to mouth, from one end of the harem to the other. Surprise was in every accent, marvel and excitement in every look. Now who was the fattest, was a question not so easy to decide. All the women were ordered to attend, and as they appeared and were arranged in a row for inspection, such laughing and giggling, such animation and tumult had never been known in a Cashgar harem, since the commencement of the

dynasty. All the fat women compared themselves one with the other.

"I am fatter than you," said one.

"You are not."

"I am," said another.

"See here my fat," said a fourth.

"See mine."

"Look how round I am here."

"I am rounder," continued others, *Dilpez* compared herself to *Ferbehgil*—*Shishmanloo* to *Ajebghoraz*, and *Poorshekm* to *Chokchey*. And loud and fierce were the discussions, each one seeking to be the favourite, until *Badboo*, a middle aged slave, one who had no pretensions to charms, and who really possessed no attraction beyond preponderating obesity, was ordered to stand forth, and she after having been measured, weighed and commented upon, was pronounced by acclamation to be the fattest. Having been dressed, washed, and ornamented, she was straightway led to the Shah, and amid the jeers, the sneers, and the astonishment of the whole harem, was paraded to the royal apartment, introduced, and there left.

We must now turn to where Mobarek Shah, having fled from the interior of the bath on the shock of the earthquake, was standing in his bathing clothes in the middle of the street, awaiting, with many others, the result of the catastrophe. No one recognized him in this guise, and he now felt half inclined to acknowledge himself to be the Shah, in order that he might, by his authority, bestow help to those of his subjects, who perchance had suffered by the event. However, as nothing in the immediate neighbourhood of the bath had taken place requiring his aid, after a sufficient interval had elapsed, he retired to take possession of his clothes, anxious to explore what of ruin or disaster might have occurred in the city.

In the confusion which ensued in the bath, in vain he sought for his own apparel—neither cap, nor vest, nor shawl, nor trousers, nor cloak could be found, and after a fruitless search, he was obliged to put up, greatly to his disgust, with the much worn, and little attractive garments, left by Chacal Beg. Never had he before adopted so

entire a disguise; but as he intended that the penance he was about to endure in these clothes should last but a little while, he abstained from recurring to those expedients for procuring better, which it is obvious he might have adopted. He sallied forth, and bent his way through the great thoroughfares, loitering about with the intention of redressing any wrong which he might perceive, or bestowing his assistance, wherever it might be required. Just as he was turning from one street into another, where the cupola of a great caravanserai had fallen in, suddenly he felt an odd sensation in the face—a twitching of the nose—a jerking of the eyes, and an enlargement of the lips, for which he could not account, and which must have taken place, exactly at the same moment when a similar metamorphosis took place in Chacal. He paused to consider whence such sensations could arise, but excited by the desire of being useful, and anxious to proceed to the spot where the disaster had occurred, he merely passed his hand over his face, and finding all his features in their right places, hastened on-

'ds to the fallen caravanserai. Having reached scene of action, he discovered that the re- rt was not exaggerated—destruction had over- ten the company of merchants there assem- ed ; a great portion of their goods were buried the ruins, and fears entertained that some of eir owners were buried with them. Mobarek mediately advanced into the very centre f the confusion, and made himself conspicuous y his exertions in extracting bales, trunks, nd packages from the fallen materials. Some f the merchants seeing a suspicious looking person, meanly dressed, and distinguished in no manner from the crowd, excepting by a very unprepossessing appearance, began to inquire who he was, and why he was laying hands upon property not his own, and when they found him still persevering, they thought it high time to defend such an invasion of their property. Mobarek on the other hand, finding that the exertions of the lookers on were not sufficiently vigorous, loudly made remonstrances in words denoting authority, and issued his orders with all the self-confidence produced by high situation.

"Who is this brawler," said a merchant standing by, "what dirt is he eating? Whence comes he?"

"O little man," cried out another addressing himself to Mobarek, "are you turned mad all of a sudden, or is your brain perchance buried in the desolation?"

"Hold your peace," exclaimed Mobarek, "give us more work and less words; who knows whether some unfortunate soul *may* not be buried in the ruins!"

"And if he is," said the Daroga or police magistrate who stepped up at the same *time*, "is it your duty to seek him, little man and great donkey!"

When Mobarek perceived his own officer, and heard himself addressed in such like language, he thought it his duty to throw off his disguise, and advancing towards him, whilst he seized him by the beard, exclaimed, "Dog! what words are these? Do you not see and recognize your King?"

The Daroga first inspecting his face, then casting his eyes over his person, burst into a fit of laughter and exclaimed, "King, indeed!

:ashallah! the earthquake has shaken men's its out of their places as well as the cupolas f caravanserais. If you, a poor fakir are a :ing, what must I be who am a Daroga? ho, go, go be mad some where else, but let hese honest folks find their own goods, and ury their own dead."

Mobarek who was in truth the mildest of princes, on hearing these words, grew red with rage, and began to expostulate and beat about him with fury. "Seize the villain," said he to the surrounding crowd, "I who am the Shah, am I to be bearded in this manner by my own slave?"

Upon these words being spoken, a loud and taunting shout was heard to issue from the crowd, the loudest and most excited of the shouters being the Daroga himself. "Madman! madman!" was echoed from mouth to mouth; "here is a burnt father of a Turk who calls himself our King; away with him, strike his mouth, beat him with stripes, away with him."

Mobarek hearing these words, seeing that his

interference only excited fresh tumult, and conceiving the earthquake had turned the heads of his subjects, slowly walked away with rage in his heart and astonishment in his mind. "I will soon set this matter to rights," said he to himself as he bent his steps towards his own palace, "if the people will revile their Shah and refuse his help when he offers it, they must stand by the consequences, and that wretch of a Daroga too! his father must be sent to burn; of that there is no doubt."

Upon this, entering the private gate of his palace, he was making his way to the interior courts, when he was suddenly stopped by the door-keeper, who exclaimed, "dog's father, and mother's whelp, whither go ye? are you for making a kennel of a king's palace?"

"As Allah is great," exclaimed Mobarek, "there must be some devilry in this." Then turning to the door-keeper, he said with emphasis and deliberation, "now, little man, as you love your soul, look me well in the face and tell me who am I?"

"Who are you?" said the door-keeper, "what words are these? am I, the Shah's

door-keeper, to be called upon by every son of a burnt father to tell him, who are the unclean parents that begat him? What care I who they are? But," said he, looking at him straight in the face, "for this once I will tell you, that you are an ugly dog, a dog that eats much dirt, and a dog that will get kicked out if he walks two steps further."

"Mashallah!" exclaimed the King with a smile, "I can't be worse off than this, I am kicked out of my own house at my own door, and by my own servant! Satan has entered Cashgar with the earthquake, and all my subjects are running mad as fast as they can! I'll address you once more," said the Shah to the door-keeper, "and should you then not hearken unto my words, may Allah have mercy upon you, for I will not. Tell me, madman, do you know your King when you see him?"

"Madman yourself," said the officer; "do I know him? did he not enter this gate an hour ago, and is he not now within the harem —what words are these?"

"Now I know that you must have lost your wits or your eye sight," said Mobarek, "for who is your King but I?"

"See, see," said the door-keeper, pointing his finger in derision, "here is a dog without a saint, who calls himself King — here, children!" he cried with a loud voice to some attendant ferashes, "here bring sticks and turn this fellow out. Let us not strike his head off, for our master and lord the King is a forgiving monarch, and will not see men hurt; but let us teach him that beards are not to be laughed at in Cashgar, and that there is beating to be had here, as well as in other places which acknowledge the true faith."

Upon this there was a charge made by the ferashes, headed by the door-keeper against the unfortunate Mobarek, who seeing himself attacked, thought it prudent to retreat, in order that he might have leisure to reflect what line of conduct to pursue in this posture of his affairs. Upon consideration he came to the conclusion either that the evil eye had struck the whole of the inhabitants of Cashgar at one and the same time, when the city was visited by the earthquake, or that he himself was under the influence of sorcery. All those who had seen him, and who ought to have known his person, rejected him as one totally unknown; he

as, therefore, anxious to ascertain how the nange could have been produced.

Perambulating the street, he met a reverend nan, a priest, one whom he supposed would not leceive a stranger, and him he accosted. "Peace attend you, Sir priest," said Mobarek, "as you cherish your beard and reflect on the years gone bye of which it is the representative, I conjure you to look into my face and tell me what sort of a face it is, and if you will be so kind, make me out a catalogue of all my features."

The priest was not a little astonished by this address, but extraordinary events having lately taken place in Cashgar, he thought he might as well add this one to the list. "Upon my head be it," said he, "whatever may be your motive, I am not a man to cheat you out of your humour. Therefore, in the first place, I must tell you that your nose is short and crusty."

"How is that?" said Mobarek, with a start, "it was always aquiline and handsome."

"Then your eyes are small and green."

"They were always large and black before!" exclaimed the King.

"Your forehead is low, your cheeks high, your chin long, and in one word you are so ugly, that dogs have the advantage of you."

"O wonder, wonder!" exclaimed Mobarek, "here am I, who have always been compared to the moon, and even surpassed the sun in beauty, become less than a dog! Here has been sorcery at work, and I am its victim! Thank you, sir," he said to the priest, "for the trouble I have occasioned, but, perhaps, you will be able to tell me where the best magician lives in Cashgar, in order that I may go seek his advice on this distressing occasion.

"I only know of one," said the priest, "and he is a barber, who lives hard by; he has some reputation as a magician, much as an astrologer, and more as a barber." Upon which, describing the house in which this man was to be found, the reverend man pursued his road.

Mobarek without delay bent his steps towards the barber's house, who by a strange coincidence happened to be the very same person who had been visited by Chacal on that very same morning. Having found the shop with

ase, for it was well known in the neighbourood, without hesitation he walked in! "Peace e with you," said Mobarek, eyeing the barber vith much interest.

"Peace return to you," answered the other as he gazed upon the face of his customer, and recognising at once the same features he had seen at the beginning of the day. "Mashallah! Heaven be praised—heaven be praised!" he repeated various times, in accents of most profound respect. "The stars have been kind to your humblest of slaves. This has been a great day, an auspicious day! We have not lived for nothing. When an unworthy hand touches the head of a King, it ennobles the whole body. How can your less than the least sufficiently kiss the prints of your imperial slippers, for twice thus honouring his most abject of thresholds!"

"What words are these?" said Mobarek; "have you seen me before? have the stars anything to do with my comings and goings? Can you say who I am?"

"Is your humble slave then so miserable," said the barber, "that the asylum of the

world should so soon have forgotten the events of the morning? Perhaps your Majesty may wish to remain unknown in this second disguise, if so, let the imperial heart forgive the too excessive exultation of his slave, at such unlooked for distinction."

"We understand not your words," said Mobarek, "if you know who I am, tell me so at once, for I very much want to know myself —tell me, who am I?"

"Who?" said the barber with ecstacy, "who? as Allah is in heaven, who but our Shah, our lord and master, our shadow of Allah upon earth, our centre of the universe, our asylum of the world, in short our descendant of Jem and Jah!"

And suiting the action to the word, the devoted barber bowed himself to the ground, and seizing the skirts of Mobarek's cloak, straightway carried it with eagerness to his lips.

"Thanks be to God," said the enraptured Mobarek raising the palms of his hands to the sky, "thanks and praise, that I really am what I have been, and that I am not somebody else—that I have found one who

knows me, and that it is not I who am mad but my subjects."

Then turning to Teeztrash, (for that was his name) he said:

"Oh happy and well constituted barber! you have uttered words which I have been longing to hear: you have acknowledged what has been this day denied—you have spoken the truth, and raised your Shah from the depths of disgrace and infamy to his lawful throne. I am the King—I was born a King of the line of Jenghiz—and so, as I hope to live, so let me die. But there have been fatal agencies at work in this my city of Cashgar, and to the earthquake has succeeded a blindness or an obstinate obliquity of vision in some of my subjects, which has driven me to and fro, and hearing of you as one learned in the actions of the stars and in supernatural events, I have come to enquire whence do such events proceed, and how we may restore our subjects to their right senses."

"Great words are these that you have spoken, oh King," said the barber in astonish-

ment and trepidation, for in truth there was something in the appearance of the personage who now stood before him, that did not answer to the man who had visited him in the morning—the voice was different—the manner was different—still the face was the same.

"Great words are these!" said he; "this world is a strange world and daily producing new miracles, though no one sees how they are performed. There are agencies of which we poor blind mortals know nothing. Changes are constantly taking place, though we cannot perceive them; in some immediate, in others slow and imperceptible. See, hair changes from black to white in an hour, aye in a minute, how is this? then wherefore should faces not change also? Behold the fat men of the world, how they replete and deplete—behold the thin, how they first run to skin and then to bone—remark the beards and sculls of humanity—they undergo continual alteration. I shave a head one day and make it as white and smooth as Albors, it comes back to me in a week, black and rugged as the pine forest of Thibet. And

t not your slave speak without proof and with resumption, for see that sacred head of your Majesty which I this morning shaved, will ere o-morrow's eve be covered with a fresh tint nd again be ready for my razor."

"How is this?" said Mobarek, "you shaved my head this morning! perhaps, you too have been touched by the earthquake!"

"As I live, and as these eyes now view the blessed person of the King of Kings, I swear," said the barber, "that I shaved you this morning."

"Behold," said the Shah, taking off his cap "see and acknowledge your own lie, this head has not been shaved these three days, I was about submitting to the razor in the bath, when the concussion prevented me."

"Allah! Allah! there is but one Allah!" exclaimed Teeztrash, as he inspected Mobarek's head, which was black with a three days growth of hair. "When will miracles cease? sense has dropped from my brain and I have emptied my heart through fear—this is a change! this is more than I ever expected notwithstand-

ing what I have just said—but stay !" exclaimed the barber with a still louder burst of surprise, inspecting Mobarek's right ear, " this very morning, and here I swear upon the beard of the blessed prophet," taking the ear into his hand, " this auspicious ear was slit and now it is whole. Speak, oh Shah, how is this ?"

" There must be sorcery here," said Mobarek in deep thought, " bring me a mirror, as I live there must be sorcery here."

The barber immediately producing his mirror presented it to the King, who straightway took it in hand, and no sooner had he inspected his face, than he made an exclamation of horror and almost fainted away.

"*Amân ! Amân !* pity ! oh pity !" he exclaimed, " I am dying—I am dead—I am not myself—I am somebody else. My kingdom is gone with my face, and an usurper has stolen both."

Upon hearing these words, and seeing the state into which the unfortunate Mobarek was thrown, the barber approached, and using words of consolation, entreated him

calm himself, and regain possession of his ind by taking a cool retrospect of the ast.

After Mobarek had remained silent for some me, and feeling strong enough to take another urvey of his face, he raised the mirror and azed at himself with mute horror.

"This horrid face is not new to me," said he in deep cogitation, "I have seen it before, and that not long since."

He thought and pondered for awhile, when suddenly struck by conviction he exclaimed:

"I have found it, I have it. The face is the face of a stranger who came into the bath when I was reposing—I eyed him between awake and asleep, and I recollect shutting quick my eyes to prevent them from resting upon so disagreeable an object. I see it all—whoever he be, he has stolen my face, of that there is no doubt. That man must be a magician."

"Have patience," said Teeztrash; "let us slowly ponder over things—whose clothes are those which now you wear?"

"What do I know?" said Mobarek, "after the earthquake, in the scramble finding that mine were gone, I helped myself to the first that I could find."

"What was the nature and quality of those you lost?" said the barber.

"I was disguised in the dress of a merchant," said the King, "I wore a vest, crossed over the breast, a white sash, a dark coloured cloak and a common black cap."

"By my soul and by your death," said the barber, "those were the very clothes of the man I shaved this morning. Had you anything about your person," enquired the barber.

"Yes," said the Shah, "my purse, and I believe my seals in my secret pocket—no, no, now I recollect," added he, "I wore them in my cap for better security, for the caba had no side pocket."

"Then as Allah is great," said the barber, "you have been acted upon by a sorcerer, he must be famous, and much to be dreaded, for he evidently possesses the awful and fearful secret of the *Terkrooi Bazi*. Let the Shah,

or such you are 'tis plain, let him reflect on what has taken place, and then exercise his reason and judgment upon the best course to pursue. This morning your slave was accosted by a man with a face such as you now possess, dressed in the manner you have described, who having taken off his cap, deposited it in yonder corner, and then sat down to have his head shaved. Fate so ordained that a journeyman cap-maker who had been operated upon, took a seat near the cap. He recognised it as one which his own hands had fashioned only the day before, and knowing it to belong to the Shah, immediately concluded that he who was then under my hands must be His Majesty in disguise. His suspicion was confirmed when he found two royal seals contained within the lining, and forthwith he communicated the intelligence to others, and finally to me. We were satisfied that my customer was the Shah, because although he at first denied the fact, yet as soon as he saw the seals, his whole manner acquired a new tone, and seizing upon them with avidity, he im-

mediately quitted the shop, leaving us convinced of the truth of our discovery."

When the barber had ceased speaking, Mobarek casting himself down in apparent despair, said, "What is now to be done? An usurper has possessed himself of my throne by magic, and by magic he must be dispossessed." Then turning towards the barber, he said, "tell me, O man, what is to be done! Can your art divine where that secret is to be acquired, which having caused me to be deposed from my kingdom, will enable me to regain possession of it?"

Teeztrash with all humility bowed himself before Mobarek, for he felt perfect conviction that he was the Shah, and after some thought, said, "Man is not placed in this world, be he King, or be he subject to eat the bread of unmixed prosperity—that is reserved for hereafter—reverses are his trials, and by his conduct under such trials will he be judged. 'Tis plain, O King, that Allah has designed you for future beatitude, since he has ordained this mode of trying your faith. 'Tis your duty to regain your kingdom, and

ou will have to undergo every sort of trouble, tigue, and privation in the attempt, and shallah! you will succeed at last, for fraud o palpable as this will sooner or later be de-ected."

Mobarek, horrified at wearing a face not is own, and impatient for a magician as ever sick man felt for a doctor, was relieved when the barber had delivered himself of his moral effusion, and then with great earnestness en-quired again, "What is to be done? Whither can I go? What can I do to get rid of this awful disaster? Are there not wise men enough in Cashgar to overcome a rascal?"

"In a far distant country, O King!" said Teeztrash, "on the borders of a great lake, in the dominions of the great Blooddrinker, where sects of all denomination, infidels, jews, worshippers of images, and all abomina-tions are allowed to herd and congregate, exists a small community of *Shaitan perests* or worshippers of Satan. The sons of this abominable race are magicians, sorcerers, necromancers—they believe in every species of

witchcraft, and practice numerous wicked incantations—they subsist by making philters, charms, spells, and talismans, and then spread themselves over the world to poison the minds of the credulous, and deceive the ignorant and unwary. Should one of those wretches have travelled hitherwards, we must put our trust in Allah, and as he, it seems, possesses power sufficient to dispossess our King of his throne, it is plain, that for wise purposes the Shaitan has been allowed to reign triumphant for a while, and will only be expelled when the people of Cashgar being convinced of their impurities and abominations, shall reform, and becoming wise and virtuous, will make their city too disagreeable a place of residence for him. As for you, O King," continued Teeztrash, "your slave only sees one course to pursue, which is to bow your head unto the dust before the decrees of Allah, and in token of your resignation to make a vow and a pilgrimage."

"How?" said Mobarek, "are you a priest and a man of God that should ordain vows and recommend pilgrimages?"

"Your slave is less than the least," said the barber; "he has read books, has studied his rudicum of astrology, and has conversed with wise men who know things. There is nothing like a vow when the mind is in distress, and no act more wholesome both for soul and body than a pilgrimage. The one secures an object of hope, and the other whilst it keeps that hope alive, also allays irritation of body and mind, giving to both something to do. Despise not wisdom because it comes from a barber. Water is still water, though it springs from mud and slime."

The dejected Mobarek heard the words of Teeztrash with feelings similar to those of one who hears his death warrant pronounced. The pilgrimage which he was advised to undertake was to the tomb of Nouh al Nebi, the first and elder of all the prophets, which was said to exist at the foot of the mountains of Ararat, in the neighbourhood of which was situated the country of the *Shaitan peresta* or devil worshippers. Thus uniting a religious motive to an act of necessity, the barber insisted that success would not fail to crown his

enterprize, and he dwelt the more upon this because viewing the question in every possible light, he did not see how the difficulty could be otherwise encountered. The face is that which distinguishes one man from another; no other part of the body possesses expression; the voice, the colour of the hair, and the complexion may change, but no features were ever so much altered as to make one face pass for another! In vain might it be proclaimed from every house top in Cashgar, that a sorcerer had stolen the King's face, adopting its sacred features for his own, no one would believe such a thing possible, although those who like the barber, were conversant in magic, and had witnessed the progress of this particular transaction might be convinced of the truth. That there was a remedy to the evil was certain, for what had been done once may be done a second time, in accordance to that saying of a famous Tartar sage, that "one good *turn* deserves another."

Mobarek, however, was slow in adopting the barber's scheme, for one predominant feeling existed in his heart which paralyzed

is energies, and rendered him a prey to he greatest infirmity of purpose. That feeling ras his love for the Princess Khoshboo. Accustomed as he was to the enjoyment of ier society, his existence being united to iers, the prospect of a separation, perhaps for ever, distracted his heart with grief. But now impelled by a stronger feeling than the loss of her society, he felt that under cover of his face, the base usurper of his throne might also usurp her affections, and this thought rendered him so miserable, that he was determined, ere he decided what course finally to pursue, to make an attempt to see and undeceive her. Accordingly, being well acquainted with all the avenues and secret entrances of his own palace, as well as with her habits of life, he proposed a scheme by which he hoped to see her alone, at a moment when he knew she might be seated in her room of retirement. Having passed the night at the barber's house, (who exerted himself to the utmost to entertain his royal guest with proper distinction,) the next morning,

before the dawn, he glided into the garden of the harem, through a secret door, and disguised in a woman's veil, contrived to pass unnoticed into the very apartment inhabited by the lady of his affections, and secreted himself in one of the adjacent closets, where we must, for the present, leave him.

When the Princess Khoshboo heard that the slave Badboo had been preferred before her, and called to the presence of the Shah, she retired to her apartment dissolved in tears and a prey to grief and mortification. In vain she recalled to her mind every word that had passed in her last interview with her beloved Mobarek, fearful lest she might have expressed herself in a manner to give offence, she could recollect nothing that could have produced this apparent change in his sentiments. It was as strange as it was grievous. She could not bring herself to believe that one so full of feeling, so tender, so just, as Mobarek should, without any reason, have discarded her, to attach himself to a coarse, uneducated slave. His tastes had been her

tastes, his affections were her affections. They had lived to each other, and although he was the best of masters to those who immediately surrounded his person, as he was the most just of monarchs to his subjects at large, yet how he could associate with those whose tastes were not as refined as his own, and who enjoyed no feeling in common, were circumstances totally inexplicable!

The people of Cashgar were more or less given to superstition, believing in the power of magic, and Khoshboo among the rest was not incredulous; yet although the whole city were willing to believe that the earthquake had been caused by a stroke of that destiny from which no Mussulman can ever be free, still so infatuated was she in her love for her beloved Mobarek that she would not allow herself to give him up, until she had again seen and heard from his own lips that she was no longer dear to him.

As the day closed in, she found her position becoming more and more irksome, for her slaves who loved her tenderly had so espoused her

cause that they did not cease conveying to her every report that was current in the seraglio of the renewed delinquencies and atrocities of their royal master. In rushed one open mouthed, saying, "As you love your soul, O my Khanum, I swear, that he insists upon more wine. He drinks much wine."

A short time after another ran in exclaiming, "He is calling the Sheik-el-islam a burnt father, and the Mufti a dog without a blessing! Such horrid words he utters, that we are putting our trust in the prophet."

Soon after, more women came with the news that he had given Badboo a slap in the face, and had desired her to go to a disagreeable place. The sum of the whole evening's proceedings amounted to this, that he was left very red in the face, his cap on one side, calling the chief eunuch the father of a donkey, and asserting with constant oaths and protestations that he was a King, and nothing but a King!

The unfortunate Khoshboo was in utter despair at all she heard, and began seriously to consider what such marvels could possibly

mean; she passed the night in a state of sleepless trepidation, giving herself up to unceasing conjecture and to unchecked grief.

"I will see him to-morrow," she exclaimed to herself, "happen what may, I will force myself into his presence, and ascertain in person from whence can proceed so great, so extravagant a change in his whole conduct. Should he persist in treating me after this manner, as I live, I will leave him and take to the deserts and mountains, and there seek repose either in utter seclusion or in death."

Having dismissed her attendants, she endeavoured to repose her harassed mind by sleep, but in vain—hour succeeded hour without closing her eyes, until at length the day began to dawn—she arose, and exerting her strength, lifted up the heavy sash that closed the window of her room, and endeavoured to withdraw the exterior curtain, in order to breathe the fresh air of the morning. In so doing, she made a noise, which became a signal for Mobarek who had already taken post in a secret closet to be in readiness.

He knew that the noise proceeded from the

room in which Khoshboo usually slept, he therefore stepped forwards and putting his eye to the crevice formed by the hinges of the door, he there beheld his beloved, seated in a melancholy attitude, her head resting on her hand, with her eyes turning towards heaven, as if in mental prayer. His heart palpitated at this sight, for it was then that he felt the cruelty of possessing a face not his own, and that, the most hideous of its kind. However, he determined, before he showed himself, to try what the sound of his voice, which was unchanged, might produce in his favour, and he, therefore, said in a low accent,

"Khoshboo! my soul Khoshboo!"

At these words, which fell upon the ears of the disconsolate princess, like the morning dew upon an opening flower, Khoshboo started —her colour left her cheek—she listened again and said,

"Mobarek, my lord, is that your voice?"

"Yes, it is me, my princess," he replied, "my soul is thirsty for want of thy charms."

Hearing this, she quickly arose from her seat, and with one bound, her heart the while

beating violently, and her eyes flashing joy, she flew to the door, and raising the latch pulled it open. Mobarek meanwhile had turned his back to her, fearing, lest the view of his face might defeat his hopes, and said,

"Khoshboo, my love, you must be prepared for a horror—your lover and your husband is a victim to sorcery, and you will no longer recognise him—he is still, however, your own faithful prince in heart, though he be changed in features."

During these words, Khoshboo had seized Mobarek's hand, clasped his knees, scarcely heeding the tenour of his speech, and was striving to obtain a more tender embrace, when as he turned his face towards her, she caught a view of it—words cannot describe the revulsion that took place in her breast at the sight—she started back, uttered several screams so loud and piercing that they rung throughout all parts of the harem, and then she fell into a swoon.

The sounds of her voice were heard by her women, as well as by some of the eunuchs who were beginning to rise, and immediately a

rush was made to her apartment—woman followed woman, and eunuch succeeded eunuch, when pushing their way into the room, it may be imagined what was their surprise, to find the gem and favourite of the harem apparently lifeless, before a stranger, and that stranger a ruffian. They all fell of course upon the intruder before they thought of the sufferer, for vengeance always takes precedence of pity, and having seized, bound, and dragged him away, they then endeavoured to restore the unfortunate princess to life, an operation of great difficulty, and which having been attended with success, was succeeded by a long fit of illness, with strong symptoms of mental derangement.

The imposter having passed the first evening of his reign in eating and drinking such things as he had never eaten and drank before, finished the day,as may have been gathered from what has been said, by an unquestionable fit of intoxication. The harem, the palace, even the city, were thrown into a state of surprise, and had it not been for the earthquake, people would have concluded that the Shah had run clean out

of his senses. But as we have before observed, that event had prepared men's minds to believe in a supernatural agency, and consequently they concluded that that same agency was acting upon the temper, habits and conduct of the sovereign.

The grand vizier and other dignitaries were anxious to observe how he would comport himself at the next great *selam* or court, which was daily held before the noon-day prayers, because the temper and humour of the Shah being always a matter of considerable public importance, they wished to ascertain whether they might hope for a continuance of the peace and good government which they had hitherto enjoyed, or whether they were to look for a change, perhaps, to be ground under a tyranny or made to groan under the horrors of caprice and uncertainty.

Chacal having shaken off the fumes of his potations, awoke to a sense of the difficulties of his situation. Aware that he was to appear in public, before the court, and the assembled dignitaries, and, moreover, that he would have to undergo various ceremonies,

both in etiquette and forms of speech, of which he was utterly ignorant, he felt loath to exhibit himself. However, being a man of quick apprehension, although coarse and sensual in appetite and habits, he determined to trust in his good destiny, and conform himself to what the chapter of accidents might open to his understanding. When the hour was come, having been duly dressed in gorgeous brocade, and the richest shawls, his arms loaded with armlets and a glittering crown of jewels on his head, he proceeded to walk in state from the apartments of the harem, to take the seat prepared for him, in the great hall of audience. All the women were on foot to see him pass, for so great had been the curiosity excited by his recent conduct, that they flocked to ascertain whether he really was the King Mobarek who reigned over them, or another.

Leaving the gate of the harem, and entering upon the more public avenues, the heralds announced his arrival by the usual loud cries, the signal for the viziers, the secretaries of state, the law officers, the men of the sword,

and all other dignitaries to take their places, according to rank, and there to await in humble expectation, and in attitudes of respect, until the monarch should appear. After the proper delay had elapsed, and the necessary quantum of awe had been excited, the wary, though apprehensive Chacal at length made his appearance. He implicitly followed the lord master of ceremonies, who preceding him, at length conducted him straight to the throne, upon which he took his seat, though with so much awkwardness of manner, accompanied by attitudes and forms so uncouth and ungraceful, that every one could not refrain remarking how much their young and elastic Shah had suddenly altered. Mobarek who united agility with grace in every step, who universally charmed the world by the amiability of his demeanour, and the benevolence of his looks, was, indeed, but ill-represented by the coarse and heavy Chacal, who although he wore a face not to be mistaken, still could not fail exciting a suspicion that all was not as it was wont to be. Having seated himself, the counterfeit King

looked abashed and out of countenance, for he no more knew what to do, or say than an idiot. There he sat looking at his court and his courtiers, whilst they in return gazed at him. Instead of immediately addressing the appointed court flatterer and maker of speeches, according to established etiquette, and receiving an answer which would tell him that he was the star of the universe, by which the rest of the world guided their actions, Chacal uttered not a word. He would have given his beard had any one of the many automatons who stood before him, said something or anything—he would even have received abuse with pleasure, and been thankful for imprecations. But it was as much as their heads were worth to utter a word out of the usual routine, and, therefore, all were silent.

At length by good fortune a great stir took place at the furthest end of the court, and to the surprise of all, to their utter amazement and even fear, the voice of their King was heard to issue, not from the throne, but in loud accents of wrath and complaint, whence the aforesaid stir and noise were heard to proceed.

"What has happened?" at length was uttered from the throne in a voice new to the ears of the assembled court, words spoken by Chacal, and which were immediately answered by the person appointed to speak to the King in public.

The stir was produced by the arrival of the eunuchs and executioner's officers, who having seized upon Mobarek in the apartment of the wretched Khoshboo, were now dragging him forward to receive judgment from the mouth of the King himself, for the dire offence which he had committed.

During this act of violence, the following words were heard ever and anon vociferated in the voice of Mobarek:

"Dogs and villains stop—whither are you taking me? Am I not your King—do not you recognise my voice?"

Then after much struggling, being dragged into the very presence of Chacal, he exclaimed pointing to the imposter.

"That wretch is a sorcerer, an usurper—he sits on my throne."

Then calling to his grand vizier by name, he said,

"Will you allow this, oh man! I who am your true King, I order you to seize and slay the villain."

Chacal, who now perceived how matters stood, recognising his own face in that of Mobarek, and who began really to fear that he might be in danger, exercised his voice without disguise, and exclaimed:

"What madman is this? wherefore is he brought here—after all am I not the King?"

"Dog and villain," again exclaimed Mobarek, "you are a *Shaitan*—a black necromancer—you have usurped my throne as well as my face."

The whole scene was one of stirring moment, every one present was in a state of alarm. The conflicting parties were eyed with awe and suspicion—no one knew what to believe. The voice of Mobarek was there, but issuing from a face that inspired disgust, whilst his own face was on the throne, but speaking in a manner and with a tone that created apprehension.

Chacal would willingly have ordered the executioners to end the dispute by commanding the instant decapitation of his rival, but he

feared had he done so, to endanger his own existence. He apprehended, should he order Mobarek's death, that the magic which he had exercised would cease, and his own face returning to him, would leave him at the mercy of the people at Cashgar, whose anger and indignation would not fail to be excited; therefore, with great presence of mind he again lifted up his voice, and said,

"Stop that madman's voice—strike him on the mouth should he speak again. Now say, oh man," addressing the chief eunuch, "what is his crime, and wherefore is he brought hither?"

"As I am your sacrifice," said the guardian of the women, "this man was found in the apartments of the harem, which is a crime worthy of death, and your slave has brought him before the asylum of the world to receive sentence from his Majesty's sacred lips; here is the executioner ready at hand."

In fact, an executioner with one hand on his sword was already prepared to sever the head of the unfortunate Mobarek, for a crime

so perpetrated had ever been followed by death without reprieve, since Cashgar had been a kingdom.

"Put up your sword, oh little man," exclaimed Chacal, "the wretch is a madman, that is plain, sense has left his brain and he is a stranger to wisdom; let him live, he knows no better—go, turn him out of the city—give him money and give him food, let him depart and Allah go with him."

At this extraordinary act of lenity, the court was thrown into utter surprise. All hearts were turned in favour of the counterfeit Shah, who thus taunted, thus abused, his sanctuary invaded and his women insulted, could with readiness forgive—act with mercy and even dismiss his enemy with life, whilst, at the same time, he conferred a benefit.

The unfortunate Mobarek was immediately conducted forth from the presence in a state of hopeless misery and bewilderment, whilst the court flatterer having a theme to expatiate upon, exhausted his wit to laud and magnify the supposed monarch to the very summit of

the seventh heaven, apostrophizing him as the most benign, the most forgiving and generous father of his people that had ever sat upon a despotic throne.

Mobarek seeing that destiny had decided against him, and that his case was desperate, brought to mind the words of Teeztrash, the barber, and bowing his head to the decrees of Allah, allowed himself, without more ado, to be taken to the gate of his own city and thence to be thrust out with contumely, to seek his fortunes in the wide world.

"The barber spoke the truth," said he with a sigh, "when he asserted that man is not born to enjoy unmixed prosperity, God is great—God is merciful! faith cannot be truly exercised unless it be tried—let me bless the misfortune which gives me an opportunity of exhibiting my belief."

Then reflecting further, he said,

"I will pursue the path which the sagacious Teeztrash has pointed out—I will make a vow—I will undertake the pilgrimage he prescribed."

Upon which uttering aloud his profession of faith, and saying, "*Al-Fatihat,*" that prayer

which gives courage and consolation to all true believers, he stepped forward with resolution, never once looking back, lest the recollections of all that he left behind him in his native city should disarm his heart of its resolves and unman his reason.

He would still have lingered on in the hope of one parting interview with his beloved Khoshboo, and would also have once more sought the advice of his now only friend the barber, but he felt that such a step was impossible, seeing that the gates of the city were barred against him; therefore crushing all such thought, he pushed forward with vigour, and pursued his journey towards Samarcand.

Turning aside from the road he came to a village, intending to seek repose for the night, but he little knew the disadvantages of possessing a bad countenance. Upon entering the gate, he was met by a serious looking villager, who eyeing him well from head to foot, exclaimed:

"Allah have mercy!"

And blowing over each shoulder, fled, and retreated into the heart of the village.

Mobarek, at this ominous overture, paused
d considered what could be the meaning of
strange a reception, but in truth he had
t long to wait for an explanation, for soon
e whole population appeared in a mass,
aking gestures full of offensive import, ac-
mpanied by yells and cries of "Go—Satan be
ith you, go—Heaven send thee misfortunes,
ut go—may your eyes be blind, go—curses
all on your house, go."

Upon which Mobarek standing up in self-
lefence, exclaimed, "What have I done? Am
I not a stranger? Am I not a Mussulman?"

"What have you done?" was retorted to him.
"What have you not done? Have you not
struck us all with the evil eye—Satan that thou
art! Has our corn not been blighted? Do
asses, and he and she goats die for nothing,
and go walking about sick, and without a
countenance, for no visible cause? Have our
children been dying of the small-pox for
nothing? Have the walls of the house you
slept in fallen down without a cause? Go—
you are a misfortune. We are not men to
speak and not to act."

"But as Allah is my witness," said Mobarek, "I never was here before. I am a man of Cashgar, and never travelled thus far."

"Father of lies, and great grandfather of deceit!" was roared out by an hundred voices; "have we not eyes, and shall we forget our miseries, because a liar chooses to deny them? Here, look at this maiden who once was beautiful, fresh, happy, see her now. Gone by—a wreck, without a face, without hope, did not your eye spoil her? See this old woman, once fat and merry, what is she now but a skin full of old bones? Are not our women, our kine, our mares, our she camels and she asses all turned barren? Does a tree bear fruit? Does the fountain flow? Do the clouds rain as they did? Can you deny having been here? Go, go"—again was vociferated by an hundred voices, until the unfortunate Mobarek, seeing that all supplication was useless, turned upon his heel and retraced his steps to the high road, shaking the hem of his garment as he walked away, exclaiming, "Allah have mercy

upon you! infatuated creatures! none of the dust of your unsainted village shall rest upon my garments."

It was then, more than ever, that he felt the infliction of wearing the face he did, for what could be clearer than that the ruthless Chacal had visited the village and left some token of his satanic art among its inhabitants. "Allah!" he exclaimed, "poor people! how ready are they to attribute misfortune or disappointment to human intervention rather than to the true cause—all being in a state of probation, as well as myself. The spoiler, although he at present may possess my throne, will also have to endure his trials!"

As he walked on improving the state of his mind by meditation, his heart overflowing with gratitude that he possessed so inestimable a gift, as docility under castigation, and a readiness of belief on matters of high import, he came unawares upon a large caravan which had taken up its position for the night under a grove of trees by the road-side. This occurrence he felt, indeed providential, for he had fully made up his mind to pass the night

unprotected and unrefreshed in the wilds of the open desert. He proceeded to where a tent had been erected, and addressing himself to one who by the benignity of his countenance, and the respectability of his appearance inspired him with confidence—begged protection for the night, and permission to proceed with the caravan on the following day. For this once, he had fallen into good hands, for the person to whom he addressed himself was one of a company of merchants travelling to Samarcand and Bokhara accompanying their goods for sale. Though the merchant did not approve of Mobarek's looks, still, touched by his voice, and the humility of his manner, and acting upon the obligations of hospitality acknowledged by every good Mussulman, he called him into the tent, invited him to the evening meal, and administered words of comfort to his drooping spirits. Mobarek said little, but opened well his ears to hear all that might be remarked concerning the state of things at Cashgar, from whence the caravan had but recently departed, and it was not long ere his curiosity was gratified. When the company

had washed their hands after eating, and were beginning to smoke, one of the liveliest of the party, a young dealer in lambskins, exclaimed, "Thanks be to Allah, we have left Cashgar at a fortunate moment, and issued from the city at a proper time. Heaven only knows what may be its fate, if matters proceed as they are now going on. 'Tis grievous to sit under a burning sun, when one has been accustomed to repose in the shade."

"In truth, yes," said a more demure merchant, "if the Shah has only been struck by the evil eye, as it is generally asserted, then with proper remedies matters may come round, and he may become the same good monarch he ever was, but should he be the prey of some unsainted enemy of God, and converted from the rectitude of his ways by sorcery or magic, then we must put our trust in Allah. Such things pass man's comprehension."

"It is said," remarked a man of easy credulity, "that the palace at Cashgar begins to be infected with the odour of a goat, and that sounds of falling stones are often heard during

the night.* Strange things are asserted—Heaven knows how true or false they may be, but most certain it is, that matters have greatly changed since the earthquake."

"*Aman, aman!* pity, pity," exclaimed a devout man blowing over each shoulder, and shaking the hem of his garment at the same time. "The world is not all as it appears to our eyes. There is a certain curtain interposed before the eye of sense which will be withdrawn by death, and not before. Whatever may really be the case, this is sure, that matters have strangely altered at Cashgar within a short time, and that our King is not the same he was before the catastrophe."

Some one then said, "It is rumoured that the Princess Khoshboo is so entirely disgusted at the present conduct of the King towards her, that she is determined to leave the court, and retreat to that of her brother the King Kamram."

* Mahomedan doctors assert that the scape goat, which was sent into the desert for the expiation of the sins of the Jews, was Eblis or Satan. Satan is also called Shaitan Abragim, or the devil stoned, or driven away by stoning, to put every true believer in mind that temptations are to be resisted by force.—Vide D'Herbelot.

At these words, Mobarek pricked up his ears, and ventured to inquire in what direction might be situated the capital city of the King Kamram, and whether it was likely that the caravan would approach it. He was informed that the caravan would proceed precisely in the direction of that city, but that although it would not enter its gates, would halt so near to it, that any one might visit the place with ease.

These were delightful words to the ears of the unfortunate Mobarek, for a new hope immediately sprung up within his breast. He contemplated the possibility of making his deplorable situation known to his brother-in-law, consequently, of procuring through his intervention the power to regain possession of his throne, and once more of being restored to his beloved Khoshboo. He cast about in his mind how to enlist his present companions in his service, and render them subservient to his necessities, but reflecting that he had been rejected by those most interested in recognising him for their lawful sovereign, and how difficult, if not impossible, it would be to make his tale good before entire strangers, he deemed it best to be silent, and to travel on

until he should reach the territory of his brother-in-law, when he would make one great effort to emancipate himself from his present dilemma.

The question he had asked, having however, excited the curiosity of the merchants, one of them inquired whence he came, and whither he was going, to which he answered that he was at present in search of a holy man before whom he proposed to make a vow, and afterwards to follow up that act by performing a pilgrimage to the tomb of the great Nouh el Nebi. He then made a profound inclination of the body, exclaiming with great earnestness, "God is great, there is but one God—whatever is, is, and *Inshallah tallah!*" The seriousness of his demeanour, and the appearance of woe which oppressed him, having excited sympathy in the breast of his auditors, he was informed that in the capital of the King Kamram there lived a famous *merdi Khoda* or man of God, before whom he could make his vow, and who would give him instructions upon the best mode of undertaking his pilgrimage, a piece of information which was doubly agreeable to Mobarek, since it afforded

him a hope that he would thereby secure a friend now so needful, and who might be of the greatest service to him. Accordingly, with the good will of the merchants, he continued to travel under their protection until the caravan reached the neighbourhood of the capital city of King Kamram.

Mobarek having reached his destination took an affectionate leave of his benefactors, and proceeded to search out the abode of the promised holy man. He was well known in the city, being one of the chiefs of the law, and, consequently, his house was soon pointed out to the deposed and wandering Shah.

It was a mean looking habitation, situated close to a mosque, where the good man was wont to hold forth to a large congregation of admiring followers. Mobarek entered with confidence, for it is one of the privileges of the good, (or those reputed to be so,) to attract the unfortunate, and he straightway made his way to where the saint was seated, and then stood before him.

He found him an old man, with a face so wan, that death has not a paler aspect, his

under jaw protruded, producing the appearance of a sneer, and, indeed, were it not for his eyes, which were extremely vivid, he might have been taken for the representative of a dead patriarch, or a ghost of ghosts. He was dressed in the coarsest manner, wearing an old sun burnt cloak over his shoulders, whilst a band of black cloth was bound round his temples, which encreased the lurid cast of his face in a manner fearful to behold.

Mobarek, who never could entirely forget that he was a King, and who had always been in the habit of receiving rather than giving presents, in approaching the holy man had entirely forgotten the necessary ceremonial of not appearing empty-handed.

Now this was a slight which no man in authority can brook, and there was none who forgave it less than the holy old man. The display he made of poverty, in truth concealed a mine of inward pride, for in proportion as he appeared to humble himself, so much the greater were his exactions of respect and submissiveness from others.

Like one of those sacred trees from whose

withered branches the sick hope to gather health and prosperity, so abided the decrepit saint in his wretched mansion in all the dignity of poverty and self-righteousness, ready to communicate his wisdom to all those who approached him with proper marks of deference; but severe and repugnant to those who were negligent of due respect.

Seeing a man before him of sufficiently ill-favoured aspect, mean in his attire, not bearing a present in his hand, and appearing to exact rather than to bestow respect, the old man casting his quick eye upon him, exclaimed:

"How is this? what has happened? are we something here or not?"

"May it please you, *O merdi Khoda!*" said Mobarek, "I am come to lay the case of an unfortunate man before you, who has at present no other hope of relief, excepting what Allah in his mercy may place in your lips. Such as you see me, I am a King!"

In the room where the old man presided, a congregation of his followers was seated, and when they heard the words of Mobarek, they

all shouted "Allah! Allah!" in surprise, succeeded by expressions of contempt and derision.

"What words are these?" said the old man turning his keen eye towards Mobarek, "do Kings walk about the world like mad dogs, making it a curse to see them? Has sense left thy brain, or perhaps was it never there? Speak, oh man, wherefore come you to me, for I who am the poorest of the poor, the less than the least, what have I to do with one who calls himself a potentate, a shadow of Allah upon earth?"

"That I am a King is no fault of mine," said Mobarek, "I was born such, and the decrees of God are inscrutable. I have been changed, the face I wear belongs to another. That I am a wanderer and an outcast is also no fault of mine—such is destiny; but yours will be the fault, oh man! if you should refuse to give heed to my words, and hearken to my representation. Wherefore do you enjoy the reputation of wisdom and sanctity, if you reject the supplication of the wretched and necessitous, and wherefore make this show of superior

oliness if you act not accordingly? I tell ou that I am a King, dispossessed of my rone by the base act of a sorcerer and a ecromancer, and that I require advice what to o and how to act."

"That you are a King," said the old man, 'I am not here to deny, if so, receive my congratulations, good luck attend you, and long may you reign."

Upon these words, a burst of derision came from his followers:—he then went on and said:

"But if a King, wherefore come you to me? There is a King in this city, wherefore not seek him? Do you not know the words of the poet?

Kings herd with Kings, and Mufties Mufties bless,
What dog the great will live with dog the less?"

Mobarek seeing it hopeless to interest the feelings of this perverse old man, turned away in disgust, resolving to defer making his vow until he had seen the King his brother-in-law. His heart failed him when he considered how wretched and hopeless was his situation, and he reflected in sadness, that per-

haps he might produce as little impression upon his relative as upon the old man of God.

The King enjoyed great reputation for sanctity, and was celebrated throughout the country for the strictness with which he upheld the Mohamedan law. He cherished priests, and was always ready to act under their guidance. In his person he exhibited all the exterior of sanctity. His arms were loaded with rich amulets, the '*bismillah*,' was engraved on everything belonging to him, such as his sword, his spear, his drinking cup, his ring and armlets. The dress he wore was one of mortification and penance, never arraying himself in his royal robes excepting upon great occasions.

His palace was everywhere inscribed with holy invocations, sentences of the law were written upon the door posts and met the eye at the summit of every gate. In short, the ear could turn in no direction but it heard words of sacred import, and the eye saw nothing but what reminded its owner of his obligations to receive the faith.

Mobarek seeing all this, felt confidence that

his brother-in-law would not refuse to listen to the petition of an unfortunate man, and recollecting what he had heard from the merchants of the caravan concerning his beloved Khoshboo, his heart beamed with hope, that his miseries would soon be at an end.

"*Ilhemdillah !* praise be to Allah," he exclaimed, "I shall be restored to the beloved of my soul, and with the help of the prophet and of my brother, I may regain possession of my throne and revenge myself upon the miscreant who has usurped it."

He almost blessed the old saint who had refused to hear him, and with these and such like feelings he bent his way to the royal palace to seek an interview with the King. Little, however, was he acquainted with the character of the man he was about to address, and still less with human nature in general.

His brother in-law, in fact, was a man of a weak mind, bigotted, prejudiced, and acting upon impulse, and whose great boast and exultation was, that he owned the King of Cashgar for a brother-in-law. Although but a petty chieftain, commanding over a small district, he gave

himself the airs of royalty, bid much defiance, and in all circumstances of perplexity, invoked the name, friendship and relationship of the King of Cashgar as his principal protection..

The great difficulty to contend with for one so totally unprotected and unknown as Mobarek, wearing the garb of poverty was to approach the person of the King and obtain a hearing. He made several attempts to enter the palace, and to make his voice heard at the daily selam, but was always beaten off, and he probably might have died of hunger in the streets, had not a circumstance occurred which dissipated his fears and gave fresh courage to his hopes. Seated in a corner of the great square before the palace, looking wistfully at the gates, hoping that some lucky dispensation might be awaiting him, he perceived a procession of strangers arrive, who by their appearance he felt assured were from Cashgar. The principal object in this procession was a *Taktaravan* or litter, indicative of a lady of consequence, and observing it narrowly, he was convinced that it must contain his beloved Khoshboo, and that she was now putting into practice that which

ad been reported in the caravan by his iends the merchants. He arose from his seat ith a bound and ran towards the litter. He as not mistaken for it was the incomparable Khoshboo herself—he could not contain his joy at the sight, and approaching exclaimed:

"Khoshboo, my eyes! my soul! see the misery of your Mobarek—I die—I die!"

All the bystanders deemed him insane, and he was driven away with indignity, but his words sank deep into the very soul of his mistress, who seeing the very person who had frightened her almost to death in her own apartment at Cashgar, became confirmed in the persuasion, that this man was, indeed, her husband, her beloved Mobarek, suffering from the effects of sorcery, and that the sorcerer was no other than the present possessor of the throne of Cashgar.

She entered the palace gates of her brother, the King Kamram in a state of such excessive agitation, that when called upon to alight from her litter, she almost forgot the circumstance of her arrival, and was slow in acknowledging

the marks of respect and attention which were paid to her by her brother's attendants, and by some of the older servants, who had known her as a child.

She was conducted to her apartment, and was informed that the King would not be long before he came to greet his sister, but she scarcely heeded the intelligence, and remained wrapt in a state of abstraction, her mind possessed by the one fact that she had seen her beloved Mobarek, wretched and forlorn, an outcast from the world.

"It was his voice—it was his very manner," she exclaimed to herself; "nothing could make me mistake it—but, oh what a horrid person;" upon saying which, she placed her two hands before her eyes. "What a face! what a hideous expression of countenance! alas, how different from his own real—his dearly beloved face—when will it ever be restored to him!"

Upon her very first interview with her brother, she determined to describe the whole case, to explain her reasons for leaving the court of Cashgar, to inform him of the present

abject situation of her Mobarek, and entreat his assistance for the purpose of restoring him to his throne and his face.

The King Kamram being taken quite unawares by this sudden apparition of his sister, was astonished and displeased.

"Wherefore," thought he, "has she left the court of Cashgar, and the protection of the King my brother-in-law? She has done evil."

And he was the more confirmed in these doubts, when he received a letter from that King, informing him to be on his guard against a certain impostor, who possibly might visit his court, declaring that he was the lawful King of Cashgar, but dethroned and bewitched by a sorcerer.

"There must be something wrong here," said he, as he proceeded to pay a visit to his sister.

As soon as Khoshboo perceived her brother she ran towards him, and after making a demonstration of the pleasure she enjoyed in seeing him, which he acknowledged but coldly, she exclaimed:

"If you be a man, Kamram, and by the

same blood which flows in our veins, I conjure you to hear my story to the end, and when you have so heard it, to help your sister to encounter the difficulties into which she has been thrown by the decrees of fate."

"We will see," said Kamram without a corresponding emotion, "we too have something to say—speak on."

"First then," said Khoshboo, "it is plain, and a received fact by all, that the whole city and court of Cashgar has been struck with the evil eye, and that the hand of an evil destiny is now pressing hard upon them. I was as happy as a woman could be in the love of the most incomparable husband that was ever decreed to a wife. He adored me as much as I loved him. We lived for each other—I was the envied one of all the harem. The fairest of the fair smote their breasts as they thought upon my superior happiness, and those who were rich in wisdom would willingly have become fools to have enjoyed, for a moment, the distinctions which were heaped upon me, your sister. In one most unfortunate day, the city was convulsed by an earthquake. Mobarek,

on whom be blessings, had on that morning ued forth to make one of his usual excur- ns, disguised and unattended, for the pur- se of detecting and correcting abuses, but nen he returned to his palace, it was plain at he had been overwhelmed by the same isfortune which had struck the city, and he turned a totally new and altered man. He ore the same face, 'tis true—he enjoyed the ame beauty of features, the same divine ex- ression of countenance, but everything else vas gone; his harmonious voice was replaced by he speech and tones of a ruffian—his engaging manners had become rude and coarse, and his tastes, from having been as refined as those of an angel, became all at once as sensual and disgusting as those of the lowest camel driver or mountebank. From that moment, I was not only discarded from his presence, and the lowest and vilest of the harem preferred before me, but I was treated with the coarsest in- dignity; I was told that I was not fat enough – that my cypress waist was a deformity, that my singing was without effect, and that if I did not drink wine and revel in impropriety, I

might abstain from attendance upon the Shah; I then became as much despised as before I had been courted. Your sister, from being the flower and chief of the harem, was esteemed an incumbrance; and thus degraded, thus despised, I determined to leave the Shah and to take refuge with you my own natural protector. Now, there can be no such sudden effect without a cause—a man cannot lose his intellect without some affection of the brain, and a King who had once been perfection, cannot all at once become the vilest of his race. Every one is now convinced that sorcery has been exercised, that the King has been changed, and it is now ascertained that a certain poor wretch dressed like an inhabitant of the west, ugly, ill-favoured and hideous to behold, who attempted to make his way to the palace and the harem, who asserted in different parts of the city that he was the Shah, who possessed my Mobarek's voice and manners, that he in fact is the victim of sorcery, and that the all-wicked magician had taken his place on the throne.

"These facts are confirmed by assertions made

a barber of Cashgar, who shaved both the cerer and his victim, on that very same day the earthquake.

"But what has convinced me more than all at the person in question is Mobarek, is the rcumstance of his having sought me in my vn apartment in the palace in a manner that one but one who was well acquainted with the remises could have done. When he knocked t my door and called upon me by name, I ecame convinced by his voice, that he was here in person and flew to meet him. I then perceived the hideous stranger, the effect was too great for my feelings and I almost died with the shock, but true it is that the heart and soul of my beloved Mobarek is imbodied in that vile and degraded form—that there it is to this day, and that he who now occupies the throne of Cashgar, is a miscreant usurper. I must, moreover, inform you, O brother, that I saw that very same unfortunate man, the dethroned King, my own husband, in the crowd as I entered the gates of your palace. He called to me with his own well known voice, he now exists in your very city, and it is to redeem

him from his present state of abject misery, that I call upon you for assistance."

When Khoshboo had ceased to speak, Kamram her brother paused for a while, and looked exceedingly grave.

"These are strange words that you have spoken," said he, "can such things be? Reflect a little. A man for twenty years of his life may prefer lean lamb, then all at once he may like it fat—there is nothing extraordinary in that—a man's voice is known to change in one night—one day it is sweet, the next it is rough. He may admire different things at different times—circumstances make him gross, and circumstances make him refined—there are natural causes for all things, without running to evil eyes and necromancy for what we do not understand. And so, my sister, I think you have been mistaken. You have been slighted by your husband (and what woman is sometimes not slighted?) and you have become angry and impatient, and instead of waiting for the return of your husband's love, you have come to me, who cannot bring it back, do what I will. You have done wrong, sister Khoshboo.

My brother, the King of Cashgar is a great King —I will see your wretched man, whom you think to be your husband, bewitched, if so it pleases you, but I must tell you that I already deem him to be an impostor, for I have been informed by my brother the King of Cashgar that such a man will appear before me. You may if you please find him out, and cause him to be brought before me, but as I said before, I make no doubt that he is the impostor, promised to me from Cashgar."

Khoshboo again repeated what she had asserted, and combated her brother's arguments to the utmost of her power, but all she received in answer was the simple permission to discover Mobarek among the inhabitants of the city, and straightway to cause him to appear before the King. This she soon did. She immediately described the person of her husband to one of the heralds, and orders were given that he should forthwith be taken before the King Kamram.

She was now tormented by many conflicting feelings, for should her brother prove unfavourable to her views, she felt that Mobarek's

situation and her own would be almost hopeless; she also could not hide from herself that it required all her love for the character and amiable qualities of her husband, to overcome her horror and distaste for his present person. So convinced, however, was she that it was indeed Mobarek who was thus disguised, that she was determined to undergo every privation, and proceed to every extremity, rather than abandon the hope of seeing him restored to his own lawful face.

Mobarek was not long in being discovered, for the man who could have behaved in so public and extravagant a manner on the day of the princess's arrival, could not fail being a marked character. When the herald announced to him, that the King had ordered him to his presence, his heart leaped for joy, for he felt that he had been recognized by his beloved mistress, and that she was the cause of his being so distinguished. He eagerly insisted upon proceeding immediately, and accompanied the herald with exultation and thankfulness.

King Kamram being conscious of his own

weakness of character, never felt safe without an adviser, and as this was a question which required discrimination, he thought he could not do better than to send for one of the heads of the law, and consequently desired that the *merdi khodai*, the man of God, whom we have before described, should attend him. As soon as he appeared, Kamram questioned him narrowly, concerning the powers of necromancy, whilst at the same time he confessed his own doubts, as to the possibility of one man being able to change himself into another.

"May your Majesty's house prosper," said the old man; "by the salt of the King, I swear that though such things are said to be, yet saying is one thing and doing is another. Now in this very city abides a man with a dried up brain, who calls himself by right a King, asserting that owing to the powers of magic, another has exchanged skins with him. He seeks for justice, demanding back his own skin, as if it only required a firman from the Shah, to peal a true believer, and take his face from him."

"You have forestalled wit, and taken the words from my mouth," said Kamram; "praise

be to Allah, we possess men of wisdom, and masters of accomplishment, ready to be our advisers! This very individual is now to appear before us and you, O man who live by wisdom, you will sift his understanding, and ascertain which of his words are wise, and which the contrary."

"By the soul of the Shah," said the old man, "the world is coming to an end when Kings run wild without their faces, seeking for justice. Let us see him first, and then we will speak such words as Allah may put into our mouth."

Upon this Mobarek, who was in attendance, was called in and forthwith stood before King Kamram, and the *merdi khodai*. He adopted the attitude of one who was himself a King, and although meanly dressed and repulsive in countenance, yet his manner and behaviour commanded respect.

"Come forwards," said Kamram, eyeing him from head to foot; "tell us who you are what are your pretensions, and wherefore are you here?"

"Were I to speak in my natural form, I

ıould tell you, O King, that I am Sovereign f the kingdom of Cashgar, and your brother ı-law, and that my true position is on the hrone of my ancestors. But destiny has lealt severely with me—Allah in his mercy has ient me misfortunes, and I now appear before you, with another man's face, an outcast, and apparently an imposter. I have already related my deplorable tale to this servant of the prophet now seated before you—he has not believed my words—therefore how can I hope that you, O King, will give them credence, unless some light from heaven more brilliant than that which illumined his brain, shall be vouchsafed to you. One appeal however, I can make which may perhaps produce conviction, and that is, to my wife, your own sister, the princess Khoshboo—let her speak, and she will assert, that my words are not false, and that though in face I am not the King Mobarek, yet in voice, manner, and sentiments, I am unchanged; should you require more proof, she will bid you seek the miscreant who has usurped my throne, who, though he possesses my face, still in voice, manner, senti-

ments and conduct is totally different—I have spoken, what more can I say?"

"This is wonderful," said Kamram, "it is more—it is impossible—what say you, old man," addressing himself to the reputed Saint.

"Your slave's words are these," said the old man. "That there is such a power as magic, no man can doubt, for do we not read of it in books? It is no secret that devils, ghols, jins, and peris exist, beings who entrap men and women, and cause them to sin, producing the thousand strange events for which we cannot account: therefore to assert that there is no such power, would be to set reason at nought. We are apt to call every thing *kismet* and *takdeer*, destiny and fate, when perhaps unseen beings are at work for good or for evil. A man one day is full of vigour and life, see him the following year, he is not to be known, he has been smitten with what we call an evil eye. He becomes withered, sallow and disgusting. May not this be the case with the individual before us? He may tell us that a magician is his enemy, who has ruined his prospects in life, and moreover may assert that the

man who sits on his throne, has also usurped his face. I too may say that old age has usurped my youth—I once was handsome, but now my beauty and freshness are fled, and I am left with the old lean and withered stem of a face, that you now see before you. I might call myself a King, and so I was the king of those who admired and loved me, but like him I am now neglected, and I sigh over my lost features and attractions. My wife too, she affirms that I am altered in person, but still my voice, manners and sentiments are the same. Then what shall we say ?—are you, O King, to place yourself at enmity with the powerful Sultan of Cashgar, because an unknown stranger asserts that that potentate is not a true King?—I am the true King, says the intruder—I possess his ugly face; he has got my handsome one;—send an army to accompany me, that I may kill him, and recapture my face. Are you to run the risk of ruining your kingdom, O King, in order to place a proper bit of flesh upon its proper head, when after all it may be the wrong one? Allah forbid! God has not put sense into our brains to make so absurd a use of it—

Let him depart, and Allah go with him. As he has lost his face by magic, so let him regain it;—let him seek the country of the magi; they will inform him how to proceed.—Should what he seek exist on the surface of the globe, and his face be at Cashgar; let him seek it there, and not trouble your presence. I have spoken—what more can your slave say?"

When the old man had done speaking, the King Kamram paused ere he gave his decision as to Mobarek's fate, and having pondered a while at length said, addressing him,

"Our brother of Cashgar has warned us to be upon our guard against an impostor, therefore we are upon our guard—we listen to the advice of the old man of God, and we approve his words. We will not assist you to seek your face—we will not order out our armies and our men of war for such a purpose—therefore, in such hope put not your trust—moreover we will not hurt you, but go your way—seek other assistance, and God be with you."

Mobarek upon hearing these words, proved himself to be a worthy disciple of the prophet

nd an inflexible true believer. Although his eatures exhibited indignation, yet he was re-igned to his fate. He straightway would have eparted, but recollecting his beloved Khosboo, aused and said,

"King Kamram and brother in law! for uch you are, do and say what you will! you have refused me your assistance—so be it—Allah is great—Allah is merciful—man is born to suffer—therefore, why should my fate differ from others? there is only one thing I ask, and I do so as an unfortunate man—you who write God's name on your door posts, inscribe it on your person, and (let us hope) engrave his image on your heart, you in all consistency must grant me my request. I ask to see my wife the princess Khosboo;—that she is so, there is no doubt—should she discard me, again I say, Allah is great and merciful, so be it, I will not commit the sin of uttering a complaint; but should she acknowledge me, then you cannot forbear your consent. You must allow us to see and to converse. Say not no, for the misery attendant upon such a denial, will be great and grievous."

Kamram referring this demand to his adviser, the sage passing his hand over his face and beard, turned up his eyes and said,

"*Zarar yok*—there is no harm done, *Olsoun*—let it be."

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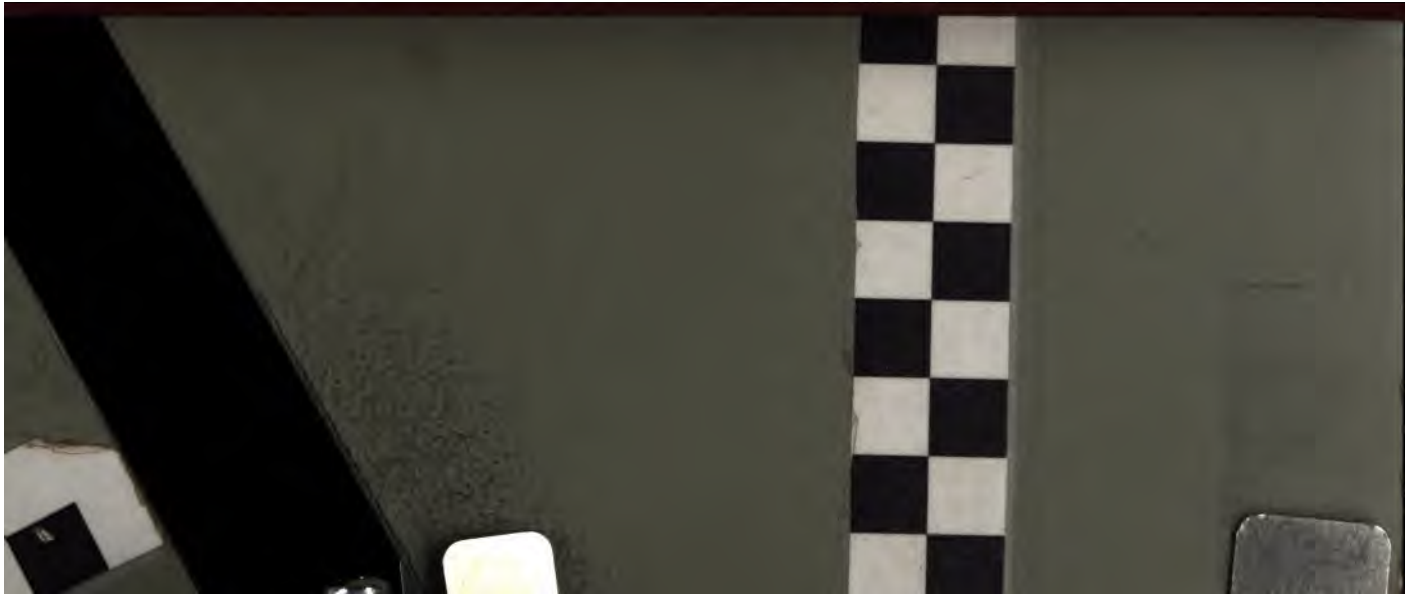
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